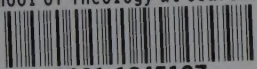


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STUDIES IN
APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY

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THE University

STUDIES IN APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY

BY

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“ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτούς”

J. M. DENT & CO.

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1909

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TO THE
CHURCH SOCIETY OF EXETER COLLEGE
OXFORD

"TOO LITTLE PAYMENT FOR SO GREAT A DEBT"

PREFACE

THIS book is the outcome of a short series of lectures which were delivered in the autumn of 1908 to the Nottingham branch of the Church Reading Society. I have made sundry modifications in the original form of the lectures, and some additions to their subject-matter, but have introduced no substantial alterations of any importance.

I started with the mere desire to record the facts as they are presented in the records of the New Testament. I had no controversial aim whatsoever. As a matter of course, I was acquainted with the various theories of the Historic Ministry, and had studied the leading expositions of what may be considered the most generally accepted Anglican point of view on the subject. And I had been struck with the fact that the historical evidence scarcely justified the dogmatic inferences built upon it; it appeared to me that there was often betrayed an excessive skill in the art of making theological bricks without

historical straw. I had noticed also that the reconstructions of Church conditions, which historians of the Apostolic age present, differed in many essential respects from the assumptions on which controversialists based their theories. But I had no desire to enter upon the controversial question ; I was at rest, as I still am, in the English Church's system ; I firmly believed, as I still believe, that this system had unimpeachable claims to be considered divinely ordained, and an unquestionable right to maintain that a real Apostolic succession belonged to it. But, as I proceeded, I found it impossible to avoid entirely all controversial topics. I could hardly investigate and attempt to explain the evidence of Apostolic writings without drawing conclusions and evolving principles. And I could hardly do this without indicating the general bearing of these conclusions and principles upon certain modern problems. Hence it has followed that, while still confining myself mainly to a summary and statement of evidence, I have been forced to touch upon points of controversy. In doing so I have attempted, so far as possible, to lay aside all partisanship. I could not, of course, avoid all prejudice. Nobody who deals with historical facts can entirely divest

himself of his own prepossessions. But I have made every effort to prevent my own prepossessions from colouring my statement of facts and evidence, and to make no assertion, whether of fact or theory, without giving to it careful and impartial consideration, and without respecting the rules of candour and moderation, which should govern theological students, no less than students in other departments.

I had no morbid ambition for publicity. I did not believe, nor did I wish to believe, that the views which I put forward possessed any special originality. The history of scholarship furnishes too many proofs that the craving for originality can be indulged at the expense of truth and soberness. But certain friends encouraged me to think that the lectures, if modified to suit the conditions of publication, might do some service to the cause of popular knowledge, as a plain and concise statement of historical evidence, in a matter which has a necessary bearing upon the theoretical possibilities of reunion between the various bodies of Christian believers. With such encouragement I felt that it might be my duty to defer to the views of experience and authority, and to embark upon the

uneasy task that was suggested to me. This must be my apology for the appearance of this book, to the deficiencies of which I am neither blind nor indifferent.

I owe a very great debt of gratitude to the Rev. H. L. Wild, vicar of St Giles', Oxford, and formerly Vice-Principal of St Edmund's Hall, Oxford, and to my former colleague, the Rev. Willoughby C. Allen, Principal of Manchester Theological College, for much valuable help and criticism. But I must not attribute to either of them any responsibility for the statements which I have made. I must also thank my brother for reading the entire work in proof, and for many useful suggestions.

A. W. F. BLUNT.

May 1909.

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INTRODUCTION

THE present condition of the Christian Church has many obvious differences from anything which is seen in the New Testament ; and these differences are connected with some of the fiercest disputes, and some of the most unfortunate divisions of later times. Partisans have attempted to justify or vilify the variations from Apostolic precedent, and, in so doing, have not infrequently gone very far in the distortion of evidence, and the rash acceptance of theories. The question of " valid " Church ministry has been a striking instance in point. At one extreme we find the unhesitating defenders of a theory of Apostolic succession, which asserts that all ministry in the Apostolic Church was derived, and had to be derived from Apostolic ordination, or, at the least, from ordination by a superior officer ; and that the preservation of ministerial grace depends upon the perpetuation

of this system intact and unbroken. At the other extreme, we find those who maintain that ordination in the Apostolic Church was congregational; that therefore congregational ordination is the best system for all time; and that any process, by which this ideal has been departed from, has been theoretically wrong and retrograde.

It is surely obvious that both these views contain something very superficial and mechanical in their principles. It is a gratuitous assumption that the Spirit of God can work normally through only one form of organisation. And moreover, it is very necessary to remember that developments, even revolutions, may be essentially divine, as much as origins: we have no right to say that nothing is ordered by God, unless it can quote a direct scriptural authorisation. A system which existed in Apostolic times will naturally be held by Christians to possess a general claim to authority; but even an Apostolic ordinance may be legitimately subject to specific modifications in later times and under different conditions. So long as it can be shown that the principles of Apostolic institutions are preserved in the later developments of system, differences

in details of form may be allowed as necessary accommodations to altered needs. The development of a threefold ministry, or of a Papacy, or of a congregational system, may have a claim to be called a divinely guided process, although it may have necessitated sundry alterations in the primitive form of Church organisation.

God works by human agency, and within human history ; and we must not lose the sense of the Holy Spirit's guidance in historical development. It is of course impossible to accept at once each and every detail of development as directly inspired by God ; that is a theory of the crudest Fatalism. But, with certain limitations, it is fundamentally necessary that we should be *prepared* to regard any developments and alterations as divinely inspired ; to examine and appreciate them on their own merits, and not merely by the artificial test of their external resemblance to, or difference from, previous conditions. The cardinal difficulty obviously lies in the problem of deciding whether a development is due to divine inspiration or to human perversion. And here the appeal must ultimately be to the sanctified

reason, exercised in an appreciation of results. This test is not by any means easy to apply ; each individual must ultimately stand or fall by his own private judgment ; though, in forming it, he will be inclined to pay a considerable amount of deference to the general sense of the Christian Church as a whole, where he can discover what that opinion is. Charity and modesty alike prescribe peremptorily the necessity of caution. But at least four general considerations appear to emerge as fairly axiomatic, and to possess a claim to be accepted as the basis upon which any conclusions must be built : (1) A system must be capable, under normal conditions, of producing excellence of individual life. It must be plain that a Church system which does not result in this strengthening and developing of individual character, cannot justly claim to be a good steward of God's grace. (2) A system must be favourable to the preservation of Christian truth and the progress of Christian thought. All truth is Christian, and all true thought is Christian.¹ Not only moral, but

¹ God is the Truth, and Christ is the *Logos* or Word of God, the cosmic principle of all truth, intellectual, moral, or spiritual. All truth is divine, and must have a place in the Christian system.

intellectual truth, in the widest sense, comes within the scope of this proviso. (3) A system must not be unnecessarily antagonistic to the corporate unity of existing Christendom. There is a sin of schism, and it is a sin which, to some extent, will vitiate the otherwise good results produced by a schismatic body. (4) Generally speaking, a system must seek to preserve an historic continuity, not necessarily (as has already been hinted) of details so much as of principles ; and, in the case of a Christian system, the principles must eventually be upheld by scriptural authority. God works normally by orderly development ; and, though circumstances may have arisen, or may yet arise, to justify a complete revolution of system, yet such a revolution could only be justified by an intolerable condition of affairs ; and the reconstruction which might succeed a revolution, would have to aim at preserving at least the principles which regulated Apostolic institutions, even if it altered the formal arrangements in which those principles had been systematised.

In order to apply such a test fairly, it is vitally important to clear historical facts of dubious speculations and assumptions. For instance, a

theory of mechanically transmitted grace, and a theory of slavish imitation of Apostolic precedent, are alike fatal to an unprejudiced estimate of historical evidence. In considering the origins of the Christian Church, we must not bind ourselves by anticipation to regard nothing as valuable or divinely ordered, unless it can be found from the very beginning. It is not so much the details of Church system, as the principles of Church life underlying those details, that call for investigation. And the stereotyped systems which have issued out of Christian origins are mainly interesting in relation to the question whether they perpetuate the essential facts of Church life, or have failed to preserve such a continuity. This is the principle upon which the ensuing chapters are intended to proceed. We shall firstly trace, as rapidly as may be, the way in which the Church expanded, and notice the most significant stages in that expansion. In so doing we shall be in the main guided by the Book of Acts. To the author of that book the essential fact in the period of which he treats is the process by which the Christian religion, from being the peculiar belief and practice of a small Jewish sect, became in theory and in

claim the religion of all mankind ; he plans his history with the utmost skill and care to illustrate the stages in that process. And no doubt this is historically the fact of chief importance in the Apostolic age.

But that period possesses other claims upon the interest of students. It is essentially a period of beginnings. It is true that the Christianity of that time is to some extent a matter of personal inspiration, of personal relation to God through and in Christ. And the Christian society has not as yet found it necessary to systematise its methods of discipline, or organisation, or worship, and has not yet been called upon to define its beliefs, or formulate its doctrines. But yet, because it is a society, therefore it cannot continue entirely incoherent ; and the beginnings of system are to be discerned, however confused and inadequate may be our information about them. Thus in the second place we shall discuss the earliest methods of Christian organisation, and the gradual development of an official ministry ; and lastly, we shall give some brief consideration to the origins of Christian worship.

The chief ancient authorities are of course the Acts, and the other books of the New Testa-

ment, especially the Pauline Epistles. Among these will be included, for the sake of convenience, the Pastoral Epistles, though this must not be taken to prejudge the question of their authenticity. On any theory, they contain at any rate fragments of genuine Pauline writing; and certainly the situation which they describe does not outstep the limits of the Apostolic age, or outsteps them by so little that they can fairly be quoted in evidence of the later stages of Apostolic organisation. Some use will also be made of the earliest sub-Apostolic literature, particularly the *Didaché*. It is impossible to assign any exact limits of time to the facts which we shall have to notice. The information at our disposal is so scattered and fragmentary that it is often necessary to estimate the significance of earlier facts by reference to later indications about them. But chief attention will be directed to the earlier portions of the Apostolic period, and phenomena will be introduced from the later portions, only when they may seem necessary to throw light upon what preceded, and to give a more complete idea of the developments previously foreshadowed.

CHAPTER I

THE GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. FROM PENTECOST TO STEPHEN'S MARTYRDOM

So far as we know, Christ left to His followers ^{Before Pentecost.} neither system nor programme. He had obviously anticipated that, in due course of time, these followers would form themselves into a definite society. A great deal of His teaching is best explained upon such a view, and perhaps can be explained upon no other (*e.g.* much of what He had to say about "the Kingdom of Heaven"). The phrases in St Matthew xvi. 18; xviii. 17, "Upon this rock I will build My church," "Tell it unto the Church," the special choice of twelve Apostles, the commission recorded in St John xx. 21 ff., point in the same direction. The institution of the Lord's Supper seems plainly to have been designed as a bond of sacramental union between His united disciples and Himself. The administration of baptism, symbolising the acceptance of, and the acceptance into, disciple-

ship, would naturally lead to the inference of some new covenant relation between man and God. Thus we can reasonably suppose that Christ did project a religious organisation, a theocratic society, the members of which were to be united by the bonds of common faith and common sacramental actions. But, so far as the records tell us, no directions were given as to any special form which the disciples should follow in organising their society. And, during the days preceding the feast of Pentecost, we find the believers in Christ, to the number of about one hundred and twenty (Acts i. 15), existing as a conventicle under Apostolic presidency, assembled for purposes of prayer during a period of expectancy (Acts i. 14). Only one official incident is recorded, viz., the election of Matthias to the vacant place among the Twelve. The method adopted is one of selection combined with lots. But that the whole incident was special and exceptional is shown by the fact that, as time went on and the Twelve disappeared, it was not thought necessary to continue the process of filling up the vacancies. Neither Apostles nor Church ordain Matthias; there is no trace of the imposition of hands in his case;

he was the man, out of the number of the hundred and twenty, whom the Lord chose to take Judas' place, as He had previously chosen Judas. The roll of the Twelve is filled up, in theory, by Christ Himself, as if He were still visible (Acts i. 24) ; the lots cast after prayer give the divine direction. The Church assumes some modest power of selection ; " *they* put forward two " (Acts i. 23, " *they* ' obviously referring to the whole assembled hundred and twenty) ;¹ but no official act of ordination is recorded or hinted at. As soon as the lot falls upon Matthias, he is " numbered with the eleven Apostles."

Then came the day of Pentecost, with its miraculous occurrences. The nature of those occurrences does not call for lengthy discussion here. If the disciples were really endowed with gifts of foreign languages, the endowment was unique, and its effects appear to have been only temporary ;² and the taunt of drunkenness

¹ " Of the men who have companied with *us* " (Acts i. 21). It seems quite arguable that ' *us* ' refers not to the eleven only, but to the general body of Christ's followers, in whose name St Peter speaks.

² See Rackham's note in his edition of the Acts. As he remarks, the universal prevalence of Greek would have made the gift of foreign languages almost unnecessary. And St Peter's subsequent speech, which must have been in Greek or Aramaic, was understood by his whole audience,

(Acts ii. 13), which some of the hearers levelled at the speakers, does not seem consistent with the hypothesis that the gift was one of intelligible speech, even if that speech was in a foreign language ; if, on the other hand, the inspiration was simply to ecstatic outpouring, which the hearers instinctively understood and interpreted as a declaration of God's "mighty works" (Acts ii. 11), then the gift is the same as that 'speaking with tongues' of which we hear in St Paul's Epistles, a phenomenon which has its analogues in the outbursts of religious emotion in many ages. But for our purpose the important fact is that, after the outpouring of the Spirit and its effects, the new sect is found to have suddenly attained self-consciousness as a society, with definite and recognisable symbols and conditions of union. Immediately after the Pentecostal conversions had added fresh believers, we hear that "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching, and in the fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in the prayers" (Acts ii. 42). And their method of social life is outlined for us, as a method of voluntary Communism (Acts ii. 44 ; *cf.* v. 4).

Here, then, we have a definite society with a

distinct unity in itself. It has a centre of doctrine in the teaching of the Apostles ; it has a principle of social fellowship embodied in the voluntary community of goods ; it has a social rite in the breaking of bread ; and it has regular meetings for the purpose of combined prayer and worship. We must note, however, that this little society is at present of a very special kind. We are told that " Day by day, they continued steadfastly in the temple, and broke bread at home ; and were in favour with all the people " (Acts ii. 46). It is quite plain, therefore, that there has been as yet no open breach with Judaism ; the new society was merely a small body of Jewish sectaries, within the national religion ; they remained Jews in every essential particular, worshipping in the Temple and observing Jewish customs, but superadded to the usual Jewish practices and beliefs a particular theory of Messianic prophecy, which found the fulfilment of it in Jesus, the Messiah, crucified for the people and now risen to heaven, but destined shortly to return in triumph. This sect appears to the populace merely as a favourable type of Jewish religionists, like in some respects to the Pharisees and Essenes. It has at present no distinguishing name ; it is

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simply an association of Jews, believers in Jesus, organised to some extent as a self-conscious body, yet in no way external or hostile to the national religion of Judæa. It has special meetings, and views, and observances, as any other sect might have ; but nothing has as yet occurred to excite active opposition from the religious leaders of the nation.

Opposition. Gradually, and at first imperceptibly, this society attracted fresh adherents. Proselytism was ingrained in the Jewish nature ; and these Christian Jews would not be exceptions to the national characteristic. "The Lord added to them, day by day, those that were being saved"¹ (Acts ii. 47) ; and no doubt the national leaders had for some time had them under review. The miraculous cure of the lame man (Acts iii.), and the effect produced by it, brought matters to a climax. The Sanhedrin arrested the two apparent leaders, and, after an informal examination, issued an order that they should not continue their public preaching and teaching (Acts iv. 18). But the order was disregarded, and the number of believers increased. "With great power gave the Apostles

¹ In every case, the citations from the Bible adopt the Revised Version.

their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus ; and great grace was upon them all " (Acts iv. 33).

The incident of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts v.) is the first instance of the exercise of discipline within the society, by the purging out of unworthy members. But, so far as it concerns the growth of the Church, its importance is, not only that the miracle helped to win fresh converts (Acts v. 14), but that it was apparently the event which led chiefly to external recognition of the new sect as a society. Such a startling occurrence naturally drew attention to the spirit and rules of the society in which it took place. And so we find, immediately afterwards, that the Twelve have a recognised place of teaching in Solomon's Porch (Acts v. 12), and are publicly acknowledged to possess special prerogatives and a special position. "Of the rest durst no man join himself to *them*" (Acts v. 13, probably, to the Twelve); and we hear that "the people magnified them, and believers were the more added." Thus, if the cure of the lame man had attracted attention to the existence of a new sect, the punishment of Ananias and Sapphira drew public notice to its organisation and its leaders. The Sadducean party (Acts v. 17, 40) again tried

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to suppress them ; and, on this occasion, even ventured to chastise the Apostles. But again its authority is disregarded ; and the society continued to grow and flourish ¹ (Acts v. 42).

The Seven.

All these events must have taken time ; we cannot fix any exact period, but it can scarcely have been less than two or three years ; and, when we enter on the fresh stage in Acts vi., we are at once conscious that a certain amount of internal development has been proceeding along with the external expansion. There is now a daily ministration of relief (Acts vi. 1) ; there is some sort of register of widows ; there is at least one proselyte from Antioch (Acts vi. 5) ; there are disciples at Damascus (Acts ix. 19) ; and among the converts are men from Cyprus and Cyrene (Acts xi. 20). In short, there has

¹ I have here taken the events in the order in which the Book of Acts records them. I need not discuss the theory (Harnack, *Acts of the Apostles*, c. v.) that Acts ii. and v. 17-42 is only a second and less trustworthy edition of Acts iii.-v. 16, that the same events are recorded in both sections, but are very much edited and trimmed in the former. If that theory should be correct, the details of the history, and our idea of the course of events, would have to be modified ; but the essential points would remain the same, viz., (1) the gradual increase in numbers of the Christian society ; (2) the opposition of the Jewish leaders ; (3) the popular esteem in which the Christians were held ; (4) the increasing cohesiveness of the Christian society.

been a great deal of quiet expansion and consolidation. The work has become too much for the Twelve to do by themselves; and the appointment of the Seven, to supervise the relief of the Greek-speaking Jewish widows, is possibly only one typical instance of a devolution of work, which had been necessitated in other instances.¹ However that may be, the delegation of work to the Seven is a testimony to the widening of the Church, and it also proved the prelude to a new development of missionary ideas; thus it marks a definite stage in the drama of expansion which we are considering.

Probably Christ's first commission to the disciples had not extended beyond the limits of Judæa. The language of St Matthew x. 5, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans," is in keeping with other circumstances of Christ's earliest teaching. But, whether we are to think that

¹ This seems a natural supposition, and is quite in accordance with St Luke's usual habit of giving the history of the Church by a selection of typical instances. The assumption would be a certainty, if we could accept as genuine the Bezan text of Acts vi. 1, "because, in the daily ministration, the widows of the Hellenists were neglected by the deacons of the Hebrews." That text is probably not authentic, but it may preserve a truthful reminiscence.

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Christ's own conception of His mission grew gradually, or that He only revealed His original purpose step by step, at any rate this first commission had been extended in the teaching of His later life ; and the ideas expressed for instance in St Matthew xxviii. 19,¹ St Mark xvi. 15,² St Luke xxiv. 47,³ were in all likelihood derived from Christ's own words, and soon entered into the consciousness of the disciples (*cf.* Acts ii. 39).⁴ The universalist Messianic hope could readily be supported by reference to many passages in the Old Testament prophets.⁵ So far, however, there had been no theoretic effort to show how the universalist application could be formally grafted upon the narrower national Judaism. It is in relation to this lack that the figure of Stephen comes into prominence (Acts vii.). Without discarding or decrying the Law, and the Temple, and the Covenant, he yet shakes all

¹ " Make disciples of all nations."

² " Preach the gospel to the whole creation."

³ " That repentance and remission of sins should be preached unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem."

⁴ " To you is the promise and to your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto Him." *Cf.* Acts ii. 17, " upon all flesh "; 21, " whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

⁵ *Cf.* Isaiah xi. 10 ; xix. 24 ; lii. 15 ; lx. 3, and the Book of Jonah.

the Jewish superstructure of legalism by spiritualising the whole conception. He stands therefore as the religious precursor of St Paul.¹ In him we find the germ of the Pauline idea that the covenant with the Jews was a spiritual covenant with a spiritual people of God, and therefore transcended national limits. The idea only exists in germ as yet ; it can perhaps be discerned more in Stephen's method of treatment than in his actual words. But the implications of that method are almost unavoidable ; and Stephen can fairly be held to mark the first stage, by which the new society began to emancipate its thought from the restrictions of Jewish nationalism, and to enter on its universal heritage.

Stephen's speech excited the hostility of Persecution. Pharisees and people (the Sadducees had been hostile from the beginning), and in a popular riot he was murdered, the Roman government being taken by surprise, or else being temporarily

¹ Is it too fanciful to suppose that St Luke was definitely conscious of this relation ? It would give added point to his double notice of the prominent part taken by St Paul in the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts vii. 58 ; viii. 1). Is our author hinting his appreciation of the irony of history, by which the moving spirit in the martyrdom eventually became the disciple of the martyr and the true heir of his ideas ?

too weak to hinder the illegality. This proved the beginning of a furious persecution at Jerusalem, which drove a deep cleft between the new sect and the orthodox Jews. The disciples were dispersed from the city; and the new beliefs were ~~consequently~~ spread by official or unofficial missionaries in many regions. The semi-Jewish people of Samaria heard them from Philip, Peter and John (Acts viii. 5, 25); Philip also preached to the cities along the coast from Azotus to Cæsarea (Acts viii. 40); unnamed evangelists spread the word in Phenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts xi. 19); and St Paul, after his conversion, proved a tower of strength to the believers at Damascus (Acts ix. 22). There must also have been a great deal of diffused preaching, of which no record remains; for the wide scope of Christianity in the second century¹ can only be explained as the outcome of widespread missionary work, extending over a long period of years. Every believer in that time was a potential missionary; and the dis-

¹ This is attested not only by the witness of heathen history (*e.g.* Pliny, *Epp.* x. 96), but by that of Justin Martyr and the Apologists, who unanimously and confidently appeal to the general diffusion of Christianity throughout the world as a sign of its truth and value.

persion which followed on this first persecution, turned them into actual evangelists. Thus persecution had its usual result of increasing and consolidating the persecuted body ; and, from this time, we can fairly speak of a Christian Church by its proper name. Up to this point, there was a Jewish sect, which existed as a society, with distinctive tenets, within the body of the national ecclesia ; from this time onwards it is a separate Church, not as yet actively hostile to Judaism, but still sundered from the national religion by the abyss of persecution.¹ And it soon acquires a distinctive name, which, as we are told, was first given to it at Antioch ; henceforth the new sectaries are known as Christians. Persecution has extended the limits of the Church ; has necessitated its internal consolidation ; has forced it into a self-dependent position with a distinguishing title. The future development of the Christian Church is now virtually inevitable. One more step remained

¹ This is the period from which, as it seems to me, the Epistle of St James proceeds. The position of circumstances, represented in that Epistle, seems extraordinarily analogous to that which must have existed at this epoch. See Mayor's *Commentary*, or his article in *Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*, or an article by the present writer in the *Interpreter* for January 1909.

to be taken, and that was not long delayed, now that St Paul was present to take up the mantle of Stephen, and to carry Stephen's work on to its logical conclusion.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

ST PAUL

IN the story of the succeeding stage of expansion the centre of importance is shifted from Jerusalem to Antioch. It is not wholly true to say that the control of early Christianity rests, not with the Church of Jerusalem, but with those of Antioch, Asia Minor, Corinth, Southern Gaul, and Rome;¹ the Jerusalem Church exercised a very real influence throughout St Paul's early career. But it is true that henceforward all, or nearly all, the impulsive forces which were pushing the Christian Church along the path of increasing universalism and comprehensiveness, proceeded from other places, and not from Jerusalem, where the Church displayed rather a repressive and conservative spirit, as contrasted with the ecclesiastical radicalism of St Paul and his party.

Summary of
previous de-
velopment.

¹ As is asserted by Ropes, *The Apostolic Age*, c. vi. *ad init.*

The step which the Christian Church had still to take was that of appealing directly to the heathen in general. Up to the present time this had not yet been done. The dispute which ended in the appointment of the Seven was a dispute between Hebrew and Hellenist Jews, *i.e.* the Hebrew-speaking and the Greek-speaking sections ; but both parties consisted of circumcised Israelites ; and the trouble must have originated in the fact that the relief-officers¹ favoured the former party, as being that to which they themselves belonged.² The Samaritans were not entirely of an alien race ; they were schismatics, who claimed to possess the true Law and Temple ; and, though the Jews would have no dealings with them, yet the admission of Samaritans into the Christian community, while it would mean an advance in comprehensiveness, would not involve any complete abrogation of the Mosaic Law. The Ethiopian eunuch was of course an alien ; and, as an eunuch, excluded by Jewish law from the assembly of the Lord

¹ Whether the Twelve or their delegates.

² This seems a fair inference from the fact that the Seven all bear Greek names, and therefore must have belonged to the latter party, being appointed with the obvious purpose of redressing the balance of equity.

(Deuteronomy xxiii. 1) ; but still he was an adherent of Judaism, a student of the Old Testament, and one of the Gentiles who conformed to certain Mosaic requirements, without undergoing circumcision, and perhaps were technically or popularly known as "God-fearers." The same in all probability was the position of Cornelius the centurion (Acts x. 2).

Thus, properly speaking, the question whether Christians must be circumcised had already been answered in the negative ; but the cases of exception were apparently so few and so special, that no violent or general opposition on the point had been excited. And, in any case, up to the present time, we have heard of no converts who had not been in some sense affiliated to Judaism before conversion, even if they were not circumcised and fully qualified Jews.¹ So far, the Christian Church consists principally

¹ It is true that the Revised text of Acts xi. 20 tells us that "Greeks" were converted at Antioch ; but many of the best MSS. speak only of "Hellenists," *i.e.* Greek-speaking Jews, in that passage. And, even if the reading "Greeks" be correct, it seems certain that they must also have been among the "God-fearers" ; otherwise, surely the Judaising party at Jerusalem would not have kept silence, and the dispute of Acts xv. would have been anticipated.

of' circumcised Jews, with a small admixture of converts who had previously been in some measure of sympathy with, and conformity to, the Jewish Law. No admission to the Christian Church had yet taken place, except through the porch of Judaism, or at least through a wicket at the side of the main porch.

The last step. The last step was taken during St Paul's first missionary journey ; at Antioch in Pisidia he turned openly to the Gentiles who were in no association with Judaism (Acts xiii. 46). This is the last stage in the expansiveness of the Christian Church ; it is the final "apostasy," by which Christianity shook itself free from the Judaic system, and opened itself to the whole world. It must have been contemplated as a possible contingency by the Antiochene Church, which sent Paul and Barnabas forth on their mission ; at any rate, on their return, the missionaries gave no excuse for the epoch-making step which they had taken ; nor apparently was any excuse or explanation required. "When they were come and had gathered the Church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and how He had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts xiv. 27).

The Church of Antioch accepted the logic of facts and made no trouble.

It is of course well known that the Christians of Jerusalem were not so complacent; and the ensuing quarrel shook the Christian Church to its very foundations (Acts xv.). The Judaising zealots were certainly rebuffed by the Twelve; but the Pauline policy was not openly and uncompromisingly accepted. The decision of the Jerusalem conference, whether it was a new precept, or an injunction with some claim to authority,¹ at any rate professed only to deal with the particular local situation. It is doubtful whether the leaders at Jerusalem can have foreseen that the result of their method of non-committal would eventually be the entire abrogation of the Mosaic law.² But so it proved. The

¹ The language used is very delicately chosen. Thus in Acts xv. 20, *ἐπιστεῖλαι* may mean either 'to write to' or 'to enjoin upon,' and probably the ambiguity is studied. So again the terms in which the necessary conditions of communion are laid down (verse 28) are selected with extreme caution, in order to avoid, as far as possible, the appearance of dictation. The matter had been referred to the mother-church, and the necessity for decision could not be evaded; but it was desirable to do nothing and to use no language which might seem to affront the spiritual freedom of the Antiochene Christians.

² See Harnack (*Acts of the Apostles*, c. vi.) for a valuable

decree or monition of the conference exercised a very faint influence on the future development ; the subsequent history of the Church is but the history of the process by which St Paul's policy grows and develops and triumphs. At first, he had bitter hostility to face, and his earlier letters bear witness to the stress of the struggle ; but the tone of his later letters is clear evidence, that by then the fight for Gentile liberty in Christ had been virtually won. And the expansion of the Church henceforth followed mainly the lines on which he conceived it. The goal which he kept in view was that of an Imperial Christendom, co-extensive with the limits of the Roman Empire, and intended to form the spiritual bond of union, which the Empire lacked, and which the worship of Cæsar and of the genius of Rome entirely, or almost entirely, failed to supply.

St Paul died with his ideal unrealised, and apparently incapable of realisation. The Roman state, which had at first tolerated Christianity without sanctioning it, was driven by popular clamour into persecuting it, often very unwillingly.

discussion of the terms of the letter. As he puts it, " the result arrived at by the Council was simply a theoretical recognition of the Gentiles, together with only an unsatisfying and an unsatisfactory determination to keep the peace."

The Book of the Apocalypse probably marks the stage at which the Christian Church has clearly realised that the Roman government is its positive enemy and oppressor (Revelation ii. 13 ; xiii.). But St Paul's dream, nevertheless, came true at last. Christianity became the acknowledged Imperial religion ; and, as a matter of fact, it achieved what nothing else could have done, in saving Græco-Roman civilisation for the world. As the Roman Empire decays, and crumbles, and falls before the invading barbarians, the Christian Church, stepping into its place, prevents the catastrophe from being complete, and eventually subjugates the conquerors. And thus the events of history justify the ecclesiastical statesmanship of St Paul. His policy was in the line of the world's progress ; that of the Judaisers was retrograde and obscurantist.

The history of the Jerusalem Church, after the conference of Acts xv., is one of gradual petrification and ossification. It seems that, as the Gentile churches sprang up in various parts of the world, the Jerusalem Christians became more and more tenaciously Jewish. In Acts xxi. 20, we hear that there are many thou-

sands among the Jews who are Christians, and that they are all zealous for the Law;¹ and in Romans xv. 31 we see that St Paul is doubtful whether the relief which he is bringing to the Church at Jerusalem will be acceptable to it; he was conscious that his attitude on the subject of Jewish observance was not forgotten, and possibly not forgiven, by the popular opinion among the Jerusalem Christians. The subsequent story of the Church at Jerusalem is only vaguely discerned; we know that its head, James, the Lord's brother, was slain, probably by the Sadducees,² in A.D. 62; and that Jerusalem was captured, and the Temple destroyed by the Roman armies, in A.D. 70. The Christian Church escaped to Pella, and lingered on, a somewhat

¹ The concession which St Paul agrees to make in Acts xxi. 26, is a striking instance of the compromises which strong men sometimes accede to, for the sake of peace. His action on this occasion is in obvious contrast with the tone of his vehement assertion in Galatians ii. 5. This latter passage undoubtedly gives his general policy and the fundamental principle upon which he acted. It is doubtful whether in the case of Titus, alluded to in the preceding verse, we are to find another instance of compromise. The grammar and wording of the passage make it almost impossible to decide with any confidence, whether Titus had actually been circumcised or not; and we have no other evidence to confirm one or the other view.

² According to the account in Josephus, *Ant.* xx. ix. 1.

obscure and insignificant body, for many years. It left descendants in various Judaising sects of Christians, of whom the Nazarenes and Ebionites are the best known. But it had long ceased to play any important part, and to exert any strong influence in the development of Christianity and the Christian system.

Such in broad outline were the stages by which the Christian Church rose to an appreciation of its universal claims. It began as a sect of Jews, and first widened its area by admitting semi-Jews, and individuals who observed only some portions of the Mosaic law. The teaching of Stephen began the breach with formal Judaism, by proclaiming a spiritual interpretation of Hebrew conceptions; and persecution widened the breach. The last necessary step was taken, when Paul and Barnabas addressed themselves directly to heathen, and admitted heathen converts into full Christian fellowship. The action was not repudiated by the leaders of the Church at Jerusalem; and henceforward it became with increasing confidence the settled policy of the Christian body, and was assumed as the natural and legitimate result of Christ's atoning death. This triumph is the supreme work of

The Israel
after the
Spirit.

St Paul's career. He was, probably, not the first to conceive of Christianity as having a message to the whole world. St Peter's words in Acts ii. 39 suggest a similar breadth of outlook ; and it is hardly credible that the universal commission recorded in the Gospels can have been merely the product of later reflection upon Christ's teaching. At a very early date the Twelve must have felt conscious that the gospel was intended for more than the Jews alone. But St Paul seems to have been the first to face the practical consequences of such a theory in all their fulness, and to argue that such universalism was not only a legitimate inference, but was the *only* proper inference from the position of Jesus Christ in the world's history. The Cross was the symbol of the world's salvation ; and therefore all the world had a right to share in its effects, without distinction of Jew or Greek, bond or free.

The Twelve appear to have shrunk from considering the measures required to carry out their commission to make disciples of all nations. According to St Paul's own account in Galatians ii. 7-10, they left that portion of the work to him. None of them, so far as we know, had as

yet preached to heathen congregations. A tradition of the second century states that St Peter did so when he escaped from Herod's prison ; but the Book of Acts merely tells us that " he departed and went to another place " (Acts xii. 17). The arrangement referred to in Galatians, which is obviously dictated by practical convenience, was subsequently altered by circumstances. Some at least of the Twelve did preach among the heathen. But they did not undertake this work readily or quickly. Possibly they doubted their own capacity ; possibly their Jewish prejudices were hard to overcome ; possibly they were reluctant to appear as if exceeding their Lord's general example. But it speaks volumes for the genius of St Paul, and for the thoroughness with which, after his conversion if not before it, he had considered the Christian position, that, though he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, nevertheless he so soon grasped the fact that Jewish nationalism had gone, and a spiritual universalism had taken its place.¹

¹ St Paul was not satisfied with mere conversion. He followed it up by intellectual reflection on all that his new-born faith implied, probably during his sojourn in Arabia (Galatians i. 17) ; and that is an example too seldom followed in modern stories of " conversion."

That indeed is the fundamental idea of his whole scheme. His lifelong contention was, that he was not an apostate from Judaism, but that the Christian Church was the proper spiritual descendant and heir of the Jewish ecclesia ; not its enemy, but its most living part. It was the same old Church of God, but now it was in Christ Jesus ; it was the true Israel which was after the spirit, and not after the flesh, with a circumcision of the heart to replace the ancient rite. As soon as he had grasped the notion of the spiritual Israel, the rest of his argument at once followed logically and naturally. And here is the paradox of St Paul's position, viz., that, while he fought with might and main for Christian liberty from Jewish ordinances, he yet declared himself to be doing so in the best interests of Judaism itself. He felt himself to be maintaining the true theory of living Judaism, in opposition to the mechanical literalism of the Jewish rabbis.

The Catholic
Church.

A somewhat similar paradox runs through his dealings with the Gentile churches and his view of their relations to each other and to the mother-church at Jerusalem. Each little local church was, in his eyes, independent and self-governing ; and he did not wish to force them into one uniform

mould. But yet, in every possible way, he strove to impress upon them a sense of mutual relation, a sense of indebtedness to, and affection for, the mother-church of Jerusalem. His anxiety with regard to the relief fund for the Christians of Judæa, his wish that each church should send its own contribution by its own delegate, are only the most notable among many tokens of his desire to establish a real bond between Jew and Gentile. For it is by such practical testimony as this, that schismatic tendencies can best be combated. And it was by similar means that he tried to keep alive in each church the consciousness of sharing in the life of one universal ecclesia. Before the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, we do not hear much from him about the One Catholic Church; his previous letters, nearly always, refer only to the local bodies. But, in those earlier letters, he takes every practical method of checking any tendency to isolation and self-sufficiency. He refers one church to the practice of other churches;¹ he conveys the salutations of one church to another;² he directs that his letters shall be exchanged

¹ 1 Corinthians xi. 16; xiv. 33; xvi. 1; vii. 17; iv. 17.

² Romans xvi. 4, 16.; Philippians iv. 22.

between two neighbouring churches.¹ All these are signs of his anxiety that the Church, which he had done so much to expand and throw open to all spiritual Israelites, should not, if possible, suffer divisions as the price of comprehensiveness. He must have felt his own responsibility in the matter as a tremendous weight. Humanly speaking, it was through his work that the Christian Church was enabled to comprise every variety of mankind, without insistence upon rigid conformity to any uniform customs or ritual ; and not the least of the burdens which he had to bear must have been the burden of fear, lest the spiritual unity, which he had exalted above ritualist uniformity, should fail to do the work required of it. For spiritual ideas are less easy for the human mind to grasp than external symbols ; they are deeper and more true in their essence ; and, if properly grasped, far more lasting in their influence. But they can easily evaporate into nothing, unless they are carefully treasured and sheltered. And St Paul's constant insistence and emphasis upon the principles of Christian unity was the only

¹ Colossians iv. 16. Other examples of the same fact are given in Hort, *Christian Ecclesia*, chapter vii., *ad fin.*

means in his power, except prayer, by which he could try to forestall the danger which he plainly foresaw. But no dread of possible danger ever induced him to exalt external uniformity at the expense of comprehensiveness and spiritual life. No menace succeeded in making him a formalist or a ritualist. He knew of no unity worth having, except the spiritual unity of free beings; and such unity can only result from love.

CHAPTER III

THE ORGANISATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. EARLY VARIETY

Jerusalem. IN tracing the growth of organisation in the Christian Church, it is of course necessary for us to begin at Jerusalem. In the earliest Christian society at Jerusalem the Twelve were the natural referees in all matters of doctrine. Their authority was founded upon the relation of personal intimate discipleship in which they had stood to Christ; and thus, when it became necessary to fill a vacant place in their number, it was understood that the candidates must possess the same qualification (Acts i. 21). It would be practically inevitable that these Twelve should take the lead; they formed the inner circle of Christ's personal followers. And, as a matter of fact, their authority seems never to have been questioned. Not even St Paul questions it; certainly he claims an equal authority, and insists that his preaching is

authentic (Galatians i. 8, 9). But he bases this claim to equality wholly upon the fact that he has precisely the same qualifications as the Twelve. He also has seen Jesus (1 Corinthians ix. 1); he also has been a witness of the Resurrection; and he puts Christ's Resurrection appearance to himself (1 Corinthians xv. 5-8) on a par with the other appearances; furthermore, his claim has been entirely substantiated by results (1 Corinthians ix. 2). He owes nothing to the Twelve, as he constantly asserts; but his right to independent authority is due simply to the fact that he possesses the same title as the Twelve possess. He asserts himself not against them, but with them.

Since, therefore, in the earliest Church at Jerusalem, the Twelve were the recognised leaders in teaching and doctrine, it would naturally follow that any matter of practical direction should also be referred to them. Their position was, of course, almost entirely indefinite; there is no sign that they were regarded as specially and officially charged with a "stewardship of the divine mysteries" in any technical sense; or that they were taken to represent God the

Giŷer of grace.¹ They were stewards of the Word, of Christian grace, like any other Christian, and no official function of transmitting grace was exclusively attributed to them. But, as men who had seen the Lord, and had been in a relation of peculiar intimacy to Him, they were the obvious heads of the Church ; and, as such, were quite reasonably acknowledged to possess a moral authority at Jerusalem ; and any acts affecting the Jerusalem Church would be referred to them. Thus the province of administration would gradually come into their hands ; if anyone wished to contribute to the society's funds, he could hardly offer his contribution to any other than the Twelve (Acts iv. 36, 37).

The Church, as we have seen, was soon extended beyond Jerusalem, by the preaching of missionaries, whether authorised or independent, official or unofficial. And, as this occurred, the Twelve would extend their functions of informal

¹ A comparison of 1 Corinthians iv. 1 with 1 Peter iv. 10 shows that the phrase had not yet acquired a technical and official sense. Titus i. 7 refers to a later time ; and even in reference to that verse it could reasonably be argued (though I think the argument is not entirely convincing) that the " bishop " is not " God's steward " in any exclusive sense, but only specially so, as a leader of the Church.

supervision. Thus they sent Peter and John to inspect and sanction the results of Philip's work at Samaria (Acts viii. 14-17). So again it seems a fair inference from Acts ix. 32 that St Peter, as the leading member of the Twelve, undertook a kind of circular visit of general inspection. Any Christian communities within reach would want to know that their arrangements were in accordance with Christian principles, and the Twelve at Jerusalem would be the proper people to whom to apply for decision and guidance.

As the Church grew in size, the work became too wide and too diverse for the Twelve to undertake personally. Probably, as has been said, they had to delegate various departments of it to others, retaining for themselves a general power of overseership. Of such delegation we are given what we can suppose to be one typical instance, in the appointment of the Seven, to manage the relief of the Grecian-Jewish widows. It is begging the question to call these Seven "deacons"; they are never given that title in the Acts; and the Philip, mentioned in Acts xxi. 8 as being one of the Seven, is there called not a "deacon," but an "evangelist." These Seven were popularly elected by the whole

ecclesia ; but the Twelve prescribed the requisite qualifications for them, and were the immediate agents of appointment (Acts vi. 3, 5, 6). The ecclesia elected them, but they were recognised to be delegates of the Twelve ; and presumably, if the ecclesia had elected any who were obviously unfit, the Twelve might have refused to ratify the election.

Certainly the work entrusted to these Seven was very important ; but it is, as has been said, at least a technically false analogy to call this event " the first appointment of deacons." The Seven were appointed for a special local purpose ; no trace exists of a similar office in other churches ; and the deacons, of whom we hear later,¹ appear to have different duties, or at any rate a different position. Here again, as in the case of Matthias' appointment, the Church of Jerusalem provides a feature which is, so far as we know, unique. It may have been, and probably was, a source of suggestion for later offices ; but that is the most that we can say. The real importance of this appointment of the Seven does not lie in the supposed fact that it is the first ordination of deacons, as the later Church knew them, but

¹ See chapter v.

in the token which it gives, that the Christian society has already in itself the capacity of becoming a true body politic ; it is ready to appoint officers, and it realises the need of some species of official sanction for those officers. It is in the spirit which caused this appointment that is seen the foreshadowing of later Christian organisation and consolidation.

As a matter of fact, after Acts viii., we hear nothing more at all about the work of the Seven.¹ Our next hint of any officers in the Jerusalem Church is derived from Acts xi. 30, where we find it possessing "elders" or "presbyters." There is absolutely nothing to tell us who these presbyters were. Some suppose them to be the Seven under an official title ; others conjecture that they were the relieving-officers for the Hebrews, as the Seven were for the Hellenists. But such theories have nothing whatever to support them. We neither know who they were, nor how they were appointed. It is possible that, as St Peter had to leave Jerusalem (Acts xii. 17), so the rest of the Twelve had also to fly

¹ Philip in Acts xxi. 8 certainly does not seem to be doing the work for which he was appointed. Presumably some other provision for it had by now been made.

from the city, and elders were appointed to take their place. But the only reasonable certainty is, that this title at Jerusalem was borrowed from the presbyterate of the Jewish synagogue, and that this Christian office was suggested by the Jewish office. All else is pure conjecture ; and it is dangerous and foolish to speculate, where our records give us no basis for such speculation.

We know very little about the functions attached to the Jerusalem presbyterate. It is absurd to assert that they possessed, from the first, an exclusive prerogative of administering the sacraments. There is no New Testament evidence for such a suggestion, except the vague reference to a presbyteral ministry of healing, in James v. 14, which surely is an insufficient basis for the theory. The probabilities are, moreover, against the supposition ; and the earliest sub-Apostolic witness is by no means unanimous or decisive, even for that later epoch. The Book of Acts gives us no more evidence than the following : from Acts xi. 30 we may infer that the elders had the management of the funds.¹ In Acts xv.

¹ Since the relief funds were sent to them by name, it seems legitimate to suppose that they were the acknowledged treasurers of the Jerusalem Church.

(especially verses 6 and 23)¹ they act as a kind of advisory committee ; so too in xxi. 18. But the real and central authority at Jerusalem seems very soon to have devolved upon James, the Lord's Brother. Thus Acts xii. 17 shows that he had an acknowledged position of prominence, even before St Peter had left Jerusalem. In Acts xv. he appears to act as president of the conference, though the letter from the conference is written in the name of the Apostles and elder brethren. In Acts xxi. 18 ff. he takes the lead ; and later tradition represents him, probably with truth, as having held in the Jerusalem Church a position of supremacy, not very unlike to that of a later bishop. There is no evidence of the way in which he acquired this power, and no sign of any formal appointment ; perhaps,

¹ In Acts xv. 23 they are called " the elder brethren," *οἱ πρεσβύτεροι ἀδελφοί*. The term " brethren," *ἀδελφοί*, is the generic term for all Christians. The presbyters have merely the adjective " elder " to distinguish them from the rest. There seems little hint here of any distinction of kind between the presbyters and the rest of the brethren. In fact, the title used in the official document rather implies the opposite, viz., a general similarity between presbyters and brethren. The Authorised Version translates the inferior text, " the Apostles, and elders, and brethren." The Revised Version reading is generally acknowledged to be the better of the two.

as¹ the Twelve were gradually dispersed,¹ his relationship to the Lord enabled him to step quietly and informally, as "next of kin," into the chief place. But, be that as it may, this is the third unique feature in the early Church of Jerusalem. In later times, and in other churches, the suggestion of a central authority may have come in part from reminiscences of the Jerusalem organisation. But the later episcopate did not, so far as we know, arise as a specific imitation of St James' monarchical power. In fact, the early history of the Jerusalem Church is important in relation to later history, chiefly because it shows how very soon the Christian body realised that it could not do without some sort of official organisation ; and so an example was set. But we can trace no definite connection between the Jerusalem Church offices, and the later offices of the Christian Church elsewhere. When the threefold ministry had come into being, analogies could be drawn with the early institutions of Jerusalem Christianity ; it was possible to compare the position of the later bishops with that of St James ; and the position of the later deacons

¹ Though St James seems to have had a position of central prominence, even during the presence of the Twelve (Acts xii. 17).

with that of the Seven ; and some allowance must be made for general imitation. But, as far as we know, the Jerusalem Church institutions were not regarded as beginning any line of successive office.

Very little is recorded about the Church of Antioch. Antioch and its organisation ; the only definite statement is in Acts xiii. 1. In that passage there is no notice of presbyters ; the authority or leadership seems to reside with five people called “ prophets and teachers,” and there is no one person with a clear title to pre-eminence. Thus, when Barnabas and Paul are ordained for their specific missionary work (Acts xiii. 3), “ *they* ” (*i.e.* the prophets and teachers before mentioned) “ laid their hands upon them.” When the two missionaries returned from their first journey, the account of their work was first given to the whole assembly, and not to any inner circle of officers (Acts xiv. 27). Finally, in Acts xv. 40, it is the whole body of “ brethren” which commends Paul and Silas to God, on the beginning of their second journey. Thus the organisation at Antioch seems very much more democratic and unofficial than that at Jerusalem.¹

¹ The contrast between Jerusalem and Antioch is plainly seen by comparing Acts xiv. 27 with Acts xxi. 17, 18. At

48 ORGANISATION OF THE CHURCH

The Pauline Churches.

There are only two references in the Acts to the organisation of the Pauline churches, but they are of great importance. The first passage to notice is Acts xiv. 23, where we find Paul and Barnabas appointing presbyters in every church which they had founded during their first missionary journey, viz., the churches of South Galatia.¹ We are not told and cannot dogmatise about the method of these appointments; the two founders may have selected their own men; or the several churches may have selected some for the founders to appoint; the latter theory seems, *a priori*, the more likely, when we remember the cases of Matthias and the Seven at Jerusalem; but no confidence can be felt in the matter.²

In Acts xx. 17 we hear that there were presbyters at Ephesus, but we are not told how they were

Antioch, the story of the mission is first told to the assembled Church; at Jerusalem, St James and the presbyters are the first to hear a similar story of missionary work.

¹ According to Ramsay's theory. But the North Galatian theory is not without supporters. Cf. Ramsay, *Church in the Roman Empire*, cap. vi.

■ The Greek word in Acts xiv. 23, *χειροτονήσαντες* (translated "when they had appointed") was certainly the usual word for election by show of hands, or by vote. But it seems by this time to have lost this special sense, and to have been employed for any kind of appointment. Thus we find it in Acts x. 41, *προεχειροτονημένοις*, where it is a case of choice by God, and any idea of popular election seems to be absent.

appointed. In verse 28, St Paul reminds them that the Holy Spirit had made them "overseers" (the Greek word is the one subsequently used specifically as the bishop's title) ; but that phrase does not help us to decide from whom they received their official appointment, or whether they received any formal ordination at all. It is a phrase which, in the present day, would be quite natural in the mouth of any minister, in whatever manner he had been ordained. There the evidence of the Acts comes to an end. We do not certainly know if St Paul himself appointed presbyters, or even if there were officers of this name (however appointed) in the other churches of his foundation. The phrase in Acts xiv. 23 (though it refers only to the churches of Galatia) is certainly a strong expression ; and it is reasonable to suppose that St Paul adopted elsewhere the method which he had adopted in Galatia ; and we have seen that there were presbyters at Ephesus. On the whole it seems a legitimate conjecture, that in the Pauline churches it was the normal rule for presbyters to be appointed (perhaps after election and probably with a ceremony of laying-on of hands) by St Paul or one of his delegates.¹ But,

¹ The numerous references in St Paul's letters to the dele-

if this was the normal Pauline system, it does not follow that it was the universal system of every Christian church ; nor can we have any definite certainty about the principles of authority which were generally recognised. At the point which we have now reached, it will be wiser and more cautious to begin, as it were, afresh, and discover what work the early churches would have to do ; we can then go on to see what hints the New Testament gives us of the way in which they set themselves to do it.

The primitive congregation.

We have already (in chapter i.) considered the way in which the Church attained increasing coherence and self-consciousness ; it is necessary, however, to recollect that the early Christian society was composed of a number of little groups, largely self-governing and independent, each of which could call itself an ecclesia. Thus we see that at Jerusalem, the "breaking of bread" (Acts ii. 46), which seems the regular term for a solemn religious meal, took place "at home." Acts v. 42 gives us similar evidence of house-services. Apparently the general meetings of

gates whom he despatches to churches of his foundation should not be disregarded ; it is natural to suppose that they would urge the carrying-out of his ideas on Church organisation, if the necessity arose.

the Jerusalem Church centred at first round the temple and the temple-worship (Acts v. 12, 20) ; but there were also meetings for worship and preaching in various private houses (Acts xii. 12). A similar phenomenon is found at other places besides Jerusalem. Thus in Acts xx. 20, we see that St Paul had preached at Ephesus in private houses, as well as in public places. In Romans xvi. 3, 4, greetings are sent to the Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (*cf.* also 1 Corinthians xvi. 19) ; in Romans xvi. 14, 15, there seems a hint of a committee managing a separate assembly ; we hear in Colossians iv. 15 of Nymphas, and the Church in " their " house ; the reading " their " is difficult and doubtful ; but, whatever it may mean, this is clearly another case of a private house being used as a centre of Christian worship. In Philemon 2 a similar circumstance is alluded to. It is true that in 1 Corinthians xi. 18, a separate building seems at first sight to be implied ; but, if the words do not simply mean " in assembly," the reference can only be to a room specially set apart. No Christian Church buildings can possibly have existed in New Testament times : in fact Lightfoot says¹ that " there is no clear

¹ Colossians, note to passage just quoted.

example of a separate building set apart for Christian worship, within the limits of the Roman Empire, before the third century." The primitive Christian congregation was a house-congregation ; no doubt a richer man would throw his house open for others, besides his household, to worship in ;¹ but essentially the congregation was the household, worshipping together probably under the presidency of the master of the house ;² and

¹ The Roman client-system would offer an obvious analogy from which to work.

■ Admitting that it is a mere guess, I would hazard the suggestion that there was in the earliest days some connection between these presidents of household-congregations and the presbyters. All or some of the household-presidents may have been appointed (whatever the method of appointment) as presbyters, for the arrangement in concert of matters concerning the general body of Christians in one locality. Then this more informal presbyterate would naturally develop later into the more formal priestly class, to which was attached the exclusive administration of the sacramental system. On that hypothesis the early presbyters were not ordained as an exclusive class to administer the sacraments, but being *de facto* the heads and representatives of their congregations (in which capacity they presided at public worship) they were appointed for the purposes of concerted Church action. There would be as yet no formal principle of a special class endued with a specific grace ; but it is easy to see how, out of the earlier practical recognition of "Superiors," might grow the definite order of priests, and how the right of presiding at public worship, which originally belonged to the presidents before they became presbyters, would be considered to belong only to those who had been appointed presbyters.

the bond of Christian union between various Christian congregations had to be preserved by some other means than a united Sacramental meal of the whole body of Christians in one town. This, after all, is only precisely what might have been expected ; the family was a very real religious unit with the ancient Jews ; and the Passover meal, which was the prototype of the Christian Eucharist, was a family solemnity.¹ Some of the pagan religions also made very much of the family hearth ; and family worship was the really living element in Roman religion.² With Jews and the best Gentiles, the position of paterfamilias was definitely priestly. It seems to have been left to modern nations to turn the family too often into a mere connection of the flesh, and not of the spirit too.

Thus then the early Christian Church was, The work to be done.³ in the main, composed of small sets of household-congregations, linked together in Jerusalem by a common assembly at the temple ; and possibly making, elsewhere, other provision for common

¹ Cf. Exodus xii.

² Cf. Pater, *Marius, the Epicurean*.

³ I must acknowledge my indebtedness in this section to the Rev. S. G. Gayford's article on *the Church*, in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*.

meetings and services of the general local body. (The possibility of doing this would largely depend on the facilities for borrowing, or hiring, a room of sufficient size for the purpose.) For such a loosely-constituted society, however, some sort of organisation was undoubtedly needed; the work which had to be done made it inevitable. Thus:—

(1) There was every kind of missionary work to be carried on. The Gospel must be preached to unbelievers; and though, of course, any who chose might be a missionary, yet no doubt a man would have a better chance of being heard, if he had some sort of credentials from the Christian body.

(2) The converts would require instruction, before and after baptism; and the better instructed Christians would of course be called upon to do this work. At first, perhaps, this was the task of the Twelve; but very soon the need for more teachers must have arisen. In the earliest stages, the teaching would be merely oral, and common tradition would be the norm of doctrine. But gradually, and no doubt at an early date, there would be compiled various collections of Christian thoughts and precepts for the guidance

of the teachers. Thus it seems fairly clear, that various collections of Christ's sayings must soon have been made ; and some authenticated body of approved precepts must, before long, have come into existence. It is perhaps going too far to infer this fact from the passages, where St Paul asserts himself to be giving commandments of the Lord (*e.g.*, 1 Corinthians vii. 10), though the phrase appears to signify something quite precise. But definite quotations can reasonably be supposed to be recorded in 1 Corinthians ix. 14 ; xi. 23 ; and 1 Corinthians xv. 3 ff. reads like a synopsis of some recognised Christian doctrines and facts. This notion is strengthened by such phrases as we find in Romans vi. 17 ; 2 Thessalonians ii. 15 ; iii. 6. And in the Pastoral Epistles the fact is unmistakable (1 Timothy iv. 6 ; vi. 20 ; 2 Timothy ii. 2). Finally, the opening of St Luke's Gospel tells us definitely, that many had written narratives concerning Christian matters, based upon the stories of eye-witnesses. We may infer, therefore, that there were manuals of Christian instruction in use at an early date ; and it is, *a priori*, quite certain that there must have been Christian teachers for the benefit of catechumens or newly admitted converts.

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(3) All sorts of financial details had to be provided for; *e.g.*, somebody must have been needed, even in the earliest Church, to keep a register of members who needed relief (Acts ii. 45; iv. 34). In the Gentile churches there must have been some organisation for the collection of the funds for the help of the Church at Jerusalem. Again, richer Christians would be expected, though not compelled, to contribute to the Christian social meals (1 Corinthians xi. 21); and, presumably, to entertain visitors to the local church. This seems plainly implied by St Paul's references to the hospitality he had received in various places, and to the help sent to him; *e.g.*, from Philippi (Philippians ii. 25). In the Pastoral Epistles, hospitality is treated as a definite qualification for office in the Church (1 Timothy iii. 2; v. 9, 10). And in 1 Timothy v. 16, private charity is commended as a means of sparing the public funds.

(4) A great deal of administrative detail had to be dealt with; *e.g.*, the care of services, the provision of meeting-places, the arrangement of the social meals, the control of business matters. To such work St Paul would add arbitration in disputes between Christians (1 Corinthians vi. 5).

(5) There must have been some people charged with the exercise of discipline and the general supervision of morality (1 Thessalonians v. 14, 15). The arrangements would vary according to circumstances. Thus, at Jerusalem, the discipline in the case of Ananias and Sapphira was exercised by St Peter. At Corinth, a public scandal of the first magnitude was left to the general decision of the united Christian body (1 Corinthians v. 4; 2 Corinthians ii. 10). St James (v. 16) recommends the private confession of one Christian to another. In 1 Timothy v. 20 an official power of rebuke is implied. In Romans xvi. 17; 1 Corinthians v. 11, 13; a species of public expulsion is referred to. And St Paul seems to use in his epistles the term "Anathema," as if it were an acknowledged formula of excommunication. We have no hint that there was any system of inquisition for offences. But it seems reasonable to suppose that there would be some sort of tribunal or committee, however informal, to investigate scandals and adjudicate upon them.

When all this work had to be done, it is obvious that the need for some kind of organisation would quickly impress itself upon the mind of the local

Early
Variety.

churches. And no doubt the supply would meet the demand. The organisation would grow gradually, and develop variously, according to the various needs in various places. In a small church, perhaps, matters of finance and relief could be left to private and voluntary charity; whereas a big church would require some central funds. The same principle can be applied to the other departments of Church effort. It is impossible to expect any thorough-going uniformity of detail at this time. The churches in the various towns must have regulated their own affairs much as was found convenient or necessary; though each church would naturally tend to pay great respect to the advice of its founder. Many little or big Christian bodies must have grown up, which acknowledged no definite tie of dependence upon any other church, and would organise themselves as they liked. The wide diffusion of Christianity in the second century proves, as has been said (chapter i.), what widespread missionary work must have been done in the first century. And there must have been many churches, which had never had any direct communication with any of the Twelve, or with St Paul, or with any

known leader; but had been founded by unknown and volunteer missionaries, who would teach them just as much Christianity as they themselves knew.¹ Some sort of officers all churches would be bound very soon to have; and it is likely enough that the organisations in the various places would more or less approximate to one type, owing to at least three reasons; (1) probably there would usually be the model of a presbyter system in the church from which the teachers came; (2) where there was a colony of Jews, there would be the local synagogue to copy; (3) in entirely heathen cities, the religious systems of the heathen cults, guilds, etc., would force the Christians to organise themselves in a similar way.² But, though circumstances would thus cause the several churches to tend

Limitations
of Variety.

¹ This point appears to me to deserve more emphasis than it usually receives; it is not only an inference of sheer common sense; it is also supported by the evidence of known churches, for which no known founder can be cited. *E.g.*, it would puzzle anyone, that cares for historical truth, to state who was the founder of the Church at Rome. And yet there must have been a large Christian society there, long before St Paul had any dealings with Rome.

² *Cf.* Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, p. 346. The reverse process is illustrated in his account of the Tekmoreian Guest-Friends (Ramsay, *Pauline Studies*, p. 112 ff.), where we see a heathen guild modelling itself on the Christian society. A similar phenomenon has been seen in England,

towards a certain amount of general uniformity,¹ there must have been a great deal of difference and informality in detail, which would cause outwardly a semblance of chaotic variety. And it is not till about 150 A.D. that we find one fairly uniform type of organisation (the threefold ministry) generally accepted.² Still, such a period of time is short enough, in the history of a society like the Christian Church. And it is surely a strong reason for believing that an episcopal system, and the threefold ministry, developed under Divine guidance in a natural manner, to find that it did so quickly impress itself upon the whole Church, as obviously the most satisfactory method of organisation, and the best-calculated to preserve pure and intact the body of Christian truth, and to keep solid and free the unity of the Christian Church.

where the Dissenting bodies have been compelled to organise themselves, in opposition to the English Church, but yet, to some extent, on the same general model.

¹ I have already alluded to the influence of St Paul, which would obviously tend to produce some degree of resemblance between churches of his foundation, and might provide an example for imitation elsewhere.

² It is quite likely that this type existed earlier, as one of several competing types. But we have no right to assume that it was universal.

CHAPTER IV

THE ORGANISATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. UNIFYING PRINCIPLES

THE limitations of variety, which have just been considered, were essentially the "accidental" results of circumstances; and, though their importance should not be under-estimated, yet it is certainly necessary to inquire, if there was any seed of fundamental and non-accidental unity at work, under all the apparent diversity between churches. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*; unity would never have resulted unless the seeds of unity had existed from the beginning. It therefore becomes necessary for us to hark back again, and seek, in the New Testament records, to discover any general principles, which may be supposed to have permeated all or most of the scattered Christian communities.

If we examine the early records of the Church, one principle is at once seen to be of universal application. The fundamental belief of the

Every Christian a Spirit-bearer.

primitive Christians was, that they were all recipients of the same Spirit, the Spirit of God bestowed in Christ Jesus. That is the explanation which St Peter gives of the Pentecostal miracle (Acts ii. 17, 18). That is the underlying idea on all the occasions upon which the Christian believers, severally or in a body, are said to have been filled with the Holy Ghost, or guided by the Holy Ghost to do or not to do something. It was not a matter of theory with them ; they held it as a fact of personal, practical experience. And they assigned no limits to the sphere of this inspiration ; they believed that this Spirit could guide them into all truth and all wisdom. The gift of the Spirit might take effect in diversities of operations, with different people ; but it was the one Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, and all Christians partook of it. This is the clue to the consistent manner in which St Paul calls the Christian converts "saints" (ἁγιοι) ; they had received the spirit of sanctity, the Holy Spirit (ἅγιον πνεῦμα) ; and so were themselves holy. This also explains the constant opposition which is drawn in the New Testament, between those who are "carnal" and those who are "spiritual" (Galatians vi. 1 ;

1 Corinthians iii. 1, 3). The epithet "carnal," it need scarcely be remarked, does not necessarily refer to a person who is subject to sins of the flesh, but to one who possesses a fleshly mind, *i.e.* a mind unsanctified by the Spirit of God; as opposed to the Christian, whose mind is under the guidance of God's Spirit, and who is therefore spiritual, or spiritually-minded. And it was natural that such a divine endowment should be regarded as theoretically subject to no human rule or restriction (1 Corinthians ii. 15). Every Christian was spiritual, and could therefore exercise his gift of grace as the Spirit moved him. This is the underlying notion in the much-debated phrase of Ephesians ii. 20, where the household of God is stated to be built upon the foundation of "the Apostles and prophets." Perhaps, in the first instance, the two titles refer to the Twelve, and other chief Apostles, and to the most influential of those who exercised the recognised gift of prophecy. But, if we ask why these two names are selected rather than any other, the probable answer is, that the "Apostles and prophets" were regarded as peculiarly the types of those who spoke in the spirit (Ephesians iii. 5); and so the phrase ultimately means, that the

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Church is built upon the foundation of spiritual inspiration from God.

Thus therefore, in theory, every Christian was a direct recipient of divine grace ; and, consequently, could act freely as a medium of that grace. All Christians were potentially equal in this respect ; and had, therefore, in theory, an equal right to use their several gifts, without let or hindrance, without sanction or commission from any human authority.

The Sanction
of the
Church.

At the same time, however, it was necessary to recognise the fact that there might be fraudulent claimants to gifts of grace, who yet might assert themselves to be genuine, and demand to exercise their pretended gift as they chose (2 John 10). Similarly, too, some sort of guarantee for public order had to be established ; God was not the author of confusion ; and, therefore, the indiscriminate use by each individual of his particular endowment, unrestrained by any regard for public edification or usefulness, must be an abuse of the gift. Hence it followed that, probably from the earliest times, or, at least, from the earliest occasions of individual self-assertion, some kind of public recognition or appointment was, and must have been, necessary, as a formal

acknowledgment of the individual's spiritual gift, and a sanction for its public exercise in the Christian assembly. And it seems that, from the very first, the right of giving this recognition was acknowledged to belong, in the last instance, to the united body of Christians. This would not, in early days, mean the whole Church throughout the world ; the institutional or œcumenical conception of the Catholic Church was not yet embodied in practical and systematic regulations. For local affairs the local church would be the central authority ; if a man wished to minister in an individual congregation, the recognition of that single congregation would be sufficient ; though, no doubt, where the congregation could secure Apostolic sanction for its nominees, it would endeavour to do so. Wherever two or three were gathered together in Christ's name, there Christ, and Christ's Spirit, was supposed to reside. But, if we remember that the word " Church " has in early times many shades of meaning, from one household-congregation up to the complete body of Christians everywhere, we may not be far wrong in asserting, that all public exercise of a spiritual gift had to be in some way, formal or informal, recognised by the

Christian "Church," which was considered as the central source of spiritual authority ; that the consent of the Church was regarded as an expression of the Spirit, quite as much as an Apostolic appointment, and was even more universally necessary. Thus, in 1 Corinthians v. 3, 4, the excommunication of the incestuous person is regarded as the act of the assembled Corinthian Church, under the spiritual presidency of its Apostolic founder.¹ In Acts i. 23 the election of two candidates for the vacant place among the Twelve is entrusted to the Christians present. In Acts vi. 3, the same is the case with the selection of the Seven ; though, as we have noted (chapter iii.), the power of formal appointment is reserved to the Twelve, whose delegates the Seven are. In Acts xiii. 3, Paul and Barnabas are commissioned by the prophets and teachers of Antioch, at the bidding of the Holy Spirit ; a bidding spoken, no doubt, by one or more of the prophets present, and approved by the assembly ; in Acts xv. 40, their commendation to God's grace is the work of " the

¹ When St Paul had disappeared, and his delegates no longer came from him, somebody would be put to preside in his place. And then the tendency would be to assume that such a president was spiritually his delegate, and inherited his authority.

brethren." Again, we see in St Matthew xviii. 17, that the exercise of discipline is to be in the hands of the Church ; and the two accounts of the commission of absolution and excommunication, in St Matthew xvi. 18, 19 and St John xx. 22, 23, have this much in common, that in both cases the commission is recorded as being given to the Christian body ; in the first passage, St Peter is obviously named as the representative of the whole band of disciples, in whose name he makes the confession¹ ; in the second, the charge is definitely to " the disciples," a term which assuredly must include more than the Twelve alone.² These passages put together seem to make the case plain ; no doubt the leaders in the Church would take the lead in these matters ; but the spiritual powers of absolution, excommunication and ordination, were regarded as residing with the Christian society in general, and not merely with its officers.

Thus we have found two unifying principles at work, and these have proved of inestimable

Recapitulation.

¹ See Gore, *Roman Catholic Claims*, cap. v.

² Cf. St Luke xxiv. 33. And see Westcott's note on St John xx. 23 : " The commission must be regarded properly as the commission of the Christian society, and not as that of the Christian ministry."

importance. One principle is, that each Christian has the gift of the Holy Spirit. He might have received it at Pentecost, like the original hundred and twenty; or by special gift, as was the case with the company in Cornelius' house; or on the occasion of some formal ceremony, such as baptism, or the laying on of hands. He might receive it once, or have it renewed for some special purpose, such as missionary work. Again, it might be formally conveyed to him by some of the Twelve (Acts viii. 18), as at Samaria; or by the local presbyters (1 Timothy iv. 14), as in Timothy's case; or by an Apostle outside the Twelve (2 Timothy i. 6), as was again Timothy's case;¹ or by local prophets and teachers (Acts xiii. 3), as with Paul and Barnabas; or by an ordinary disciple, as on the occasion of St Paul's conversion² (Acts ix. 17). There is no symptom that, at present, it was considered necessary for every minister to be ordained by a superior

¹ I forbear to discuss whether this is the same event as that alluded to in 1 Timothy iv. 14. The point is not material to my argument.

² Ananias was an ordinary disciple; he laid his hands on St Paul, who received the Holy Ghost, and straightway began to preach without further authorisation. So again, as has been said, we have no hint of Apostolic commission in the case of James, the Lord's Brother, for his prominent position in the Church at Jerusalem.

officer, before he could exercise his gift. Certain cases of such ordination are recorded ; but we have no sign that there was any universal principle acknowledged in the matter.¹ But, however the gift of the Holy Spirit was bestowed, every Christian was a partaker of it ; and, moreover, every Christian had the power, and even the duty, of transferring the gift to others (1 Peter iv. 10). And it seems quite certain that, in the early Church, no distinction of kind was drawn between a spiritual gift which might take effect merely in change of life, and a gift which might take effect in some capacity for public ministration. There were differences of degree, and diversities of operation ; but it was the same Spirit in each case ; only it was admitted that to each the manifestation of the Spirit was given to profit withal, for himself and for others.

But, secondly, if a man wished to use his gift in public, it was desirable that he should receive

¹ Thus the prophets and teachers at Antioch are not represented to have any official commission from the Apostles. Probably they were acknowledged as leaders merely because of their personal powers, because their gifts were of primary importance. No doubt, in time, the idea of a formal ministry arose from some such cases ; informal ministers adorned their office, and the gifts of the officers were consequently transferred to the office.

some public and objective recognition. The disorder in the Corinthian Church, of which St Paul complained, was obviously due to neglect of this precaution ; and naturally such disorder would always ensue, if anyone might exercise his gift in public, without check or sanction, however informal. The machinery, by which this recognition was given, varied, as we have seen. Sometimes it might perhaps be given by the mere attentiveness of the audience, or by the results of the preacher's words. St Paul often hints that the test of good fruits might be an adequate guarantee of the gift (1 Corinthians ix. 2 ; 2 Corinthians iii. 2) ; sometimes some more formal appointment was the method used. The varied character of the work would cause much variety of objective sanction. For instance, a man with the gift of preaching or "prophesying" might need no sanction, save the approval of his hearers ; on the other hand, a man with the gift of doing some definite financial work would probably receive a formal commission. But, in spite of all this variety, any ministers of the Church were regarded as deriving their authority to minister from the Church, as they derived the grace to minister from God. The commission

might be given formally or informally, through individuals or by public vote, or in some other way; but, however that might be, they were all organs of the Church's corporate life for special purposes. They did not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit from the Church, but from God; but they received the permission to use it in the Church from the Church, from the body of Christians among whom they wished to minister.

The only possible exceptions are the original The Twelve.
twelve Apostles. But it is an exception which can be of no use to establish an opposite case. The Twelve occupied a unique position, and, even in their case, we must presume that, if any one of them had been false in his ministry, the Church would have had an absolute right to refuse him audience and obedience. This is, in fact, what happened in the case of Judas Iscariot. He was one of the Twelve, selected by Christ Himself; and yet the Church felt that, since he had been untrue to his commission, it had a perfect right to take steps to have his place filled.¹

Here then we find in the early Christian Church

¹ The fact that Judas was dead was an accident, and is so treated in the narrative of Acts i., where the filling of Judas'

two fundamental principles of unity at work ; they are no formal principles, but they seem to have been none the less real ; because the Christian believers were firmly convinced of their divine inspiration. Whether they yet knew the phrase or not, they all acted upon the article of creed that they were Christ's body. The tests to distinguish true from false inspiration were perfectly simple and indefinite : " No man can say Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit " (1 Corinthians xii. 3). " Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God " (1 John iv. 2). And, in practice, these tests doubtless proved sometimes insufficient ; otherwise, the Christian Church would have been more free from heresy, disorder, and vice, than it was. But, vague as were the principles, they were powerful and real enough to

place is described. It is his " portion " in the ministry (verse 17) which has to be provided for (*cf.* verse 20). Matthias is appointed to take " the place in the ministry and apostleship, from which Judas fell away " (verse 25). Judas' death is alluded to in mere parenthesis. It is his fall from the Apostleship, and not his death, that necessitates the supplying of his place.

Cf. also Acts xi. 1, 2, where, as we can see, the Church at Jerusalem considers that it has a perfect right to call St Peter to account for his actions ; and he admits this right, by giving a reasoned defence of his proceedings.

do their work of holding the Church together, while its organisation was being formed. And, as a matter of fact, these same principles have still persisted in the Christian Church. Various denominations lay more emphasis on the one, or on the other ; it would be an endless and an ungrateful task to discuss their special views. But it may perhaps not be out of place to point out the way in which the Church of England has attempted to preserve these two principles, while perpetuating the more formal organisation, the undeniable need of which was soon forced by circumstances upon the notice of the Church. Such an undertaking may seem almost superfluous ; but experience shows, how singularly general is the ignorance of the laity, and lay controversialists (nor is this ignorance always confined to the laity) with regard to the rudiments of the English Church's position : and how necessary is a constant reiteration of those rudimentary articles.

All public ministry in the Church of England derives, ultimately, from episcopal ordination or sanction. But it is made quite clear, that the bishop acts only as the representative of the Church at large. Thus, no man can be ordained,

The Church
of England.

who has not received a special summons from the Church to a particular sphere of work ; in technical language, a " title." Before ordination, notice of the candidate's intention to present himself must be publicly read in the Church which he attends, to allow of any objection being made. At the ordination of a priest, all the priests present join, with the bishop, in the laying-on of hands ; and the priests represent their congregations.¹ During the service, the bishop, when proclaiming his intention to ordain, gives the laity their opportunity of objecting, if they desire to do so. " These are they whom we purpose . . . to receive . . . unto the holy office of priesthood . . . But yet, if there be any of you who knoweth any impediment . . . let him come forth " ; and the rubric directs that, if any adequate impediment is alleged, it is to

¹ Similarly, the public presentation of the ordinands by the Archdeacon or his deputy is obviously meant to provide an opportunity of giving a public guarantee that the candidates have been duly tested and have passed the test. The examining chaplains are thus not merely the Bishop's delegates ; they are also trustees for the Church at large, charged with the duty of inquiring on its behalf into the intellectual qualifications of those who aspire to be its ministers. As such the chaplains are bound, when it should be necessary, to exercise independently their official right to refuse to present a candidate who appears, in their judgment, to be insufficiently qualified.

be considered. Similarly, in the consecration of bishops, the laity are allowed a definite share in the ceremony ; the questions put before the consecration are stated to be asked, " that the congregation present may have a trial, and bear witness, how you be minded to behave yourself in the Church of God." This share of the laity is still more obviously allowed for in the process by which English bishops are appointed. There is a great deal to be said against the system, by which this power is entrusted to the Prime Minister for the time being ; or, more accurately, to the King, acting on the Prime Minister's advice ; and doubtless the system is not ideal. But, at any rate, it embodies the theory, that the public opinion ought to have the chance of exerting its influence in the selection of the Church's chief officers. No doubt there have been cases of bad and foolish appointments under this system ; such would occur under any system. But, as a general rule, the Prime Minister's choice is marked by sensitiveness to the public opinion of the Church laity ; *i.e.* the voice of the laity does carry some weight in the nomination. It may be that some other method might provide a more suitable opportunity for the expression

of this voice ; but it is plain that no new method will ever be accepted, which does not give to the laity a proper proportion of influence in the nomination of bishops. The Church of England therefore recognises throughout, that the commission of the clergy is given to them by the Church ; the gift comes from God, and the formal transfer of commission is made by the bishop ;¹ but the bishop's action is representative ; his act is illegal without the previous call to work, without the previous public notification of purpose to ordain. Bishop, priest, deacon, all are endued with the needed grace by God ; and all are commissioned by the Church, as Christ's Body, and imbued with Christ's Spirit. This is the most fundamental principle in the Anglican theory of Orders, and it is precisely the second of the primitive Church's principles of Order.

On the other hand, it must be frankly admitted that the Church of England has not, in the past, paid sufficient regard to the first principle, that in practice it has not given enough opportunity for any to exercise their spiritual gifts, who might

¹ It is true, I think, to say, that the bishop's action in ordination has a twofold significance ; symbolically, it represents the conferring of grace by God ; officially, it is the act whereby the Church commissions its ministers.

wish to do so. Historical circumstances are perhaps the cause of this deficiency, and it is probably impossible to apportion the blame for it aright between lay indolence and clerical assumption. In the present time much is being done to remedy this past neglect, and to give public recognition to various ministrations outside the ordained priesthood. But, in theory at least, the English Church has, at almost all times, admitted the spiritual equality of clergy and laity; for the sake of order it restricts certain functions to the clerical profession; and so demands, with full right, that certain religious ceremonies shall not be performed by unauthorised persons; but it has never, for long, given itself over to any sacerdotal theory which would imply that priests have a spiritual superiority to laymen, or have received any kind of spiritual supremacy over the souls of the laity.¹ Clergy and laity, all partake of the same Spirit, and have to minister it to others. With the clergy, the sphere, in which the Spirit must be

¹ Thus Liddon said, "The difference between clergy and laity is not in kind, but in function." Similarly Inge writes, "The Christian priest has no *essential* 'character' which places him in a nearer relation to God than other men" (*Contentio veritatis*; article on *the Sacraments*).

exercised, is formally prescribed ; with the laity, room is left for every sort of individual variation. But, so long as unintelligent sacerdotalism is not the professed dogma of the English Church, so long we can claim that it preserves the first, as well as the second, principle of Catholic unity, which the primitive Church handed on to succeeding ages ; and that, with these, it has preserved a stable succession of the ministerial order, which the Church soon evolved, and, learning to value, left as a valuable legacy to its descendants.

CHAPTER V

THE ORGANISATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH. MINISTRY

WE have now reached a point at which it be- Summary.
comes possible to summarise the species of ministerial office which existed in the early Church. Such a summary, however, can only be rough and tentative. The available evidence is not large in amount or decisive in character. And the vagueness of the terms used increases the need for caution; it is impossible to say, in every case, whether those terms refer to specific offices, or are merely descriptive of ministerial functions. For instance, the Greek word *ἐπίσκοπος* either may mean definitely "bishop," or may be a mere description of some duty of overseership; similarly *διάκονος* may be translated "deacon," or quite vaguely "one who serves."¹

¹ A concrete instance may show the difficulty more clearly. In Acts xx. 28, St Paul, addressing the elders of Ephesus,

There are, however, four passages in St Paul's letters, where something like a list of possible offices seems to be given. The first two, 1 Corinthians xii. 8-11; Romans xii. 6-8, are for our purpose of minor importance; they give a rough classification of spiritual endowments, but nothing more. The passages are nevertheless worthy of quotation in this connection, for they show how St Paul regards gifts for office and gifts for private Christian action as essentially on a par, proceeding from the same Spirit, however their public usefulness may differ. Thus "faith," "the word of knowledge," "the word of wisdom," "prophecy," appear side by side in the passage of 1 Corinthians; and, though the last three might conceivably allude to public work,¹ the same can hardly be said of the first,

reminds them that the Holy Ghost has set them as *ἐπίσκοποι* of the Church. Does that mean that they have been appointed "bishops," or simply that they have been set to oversee the Church? Is it a title, or a description of their office? Similarly in Philippians i. 1, *τοῖς ὄντιν ἐν Φιλιπποῖς σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις*, can with equal right be translated "to those in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (though the definite article is absent), or, "to those in Philippi with overseers and servants," *i.e.* those who rule and those who serve.

¹ This can be by no means certain. "The word of knowledge" and "the word of wisdom" need not necessarily

which is a private endowment. Similarly, in the passage of Romans, the (presumably) official work of prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, ruling, is coupled with the more private work of charity and mercy.¹ There is certainly no symptom here that the grace of official ministry was regarded as special, or as the exclusive prerogative of a definite class. All Christian grace is treated as similar in kind; in practice, the difference in importance between various gifts could not fail to be recognised; and here, no doubt, is the source from which proceeded the distinction eventually drawn between official and unofficial ministry; but as yet this distinction is not defined, nor is it suggested that the gift of public ministry was *essentially* superior to the gift of private faith and practice.

The next passage to be considered is 1 Corinthians xii. 28-30. Here we find a more definite list of apparently public ministrations. First are mentioned "apostles," "prophets" and mean more than private mental capacity; public preaching may also be implied in the terms, but we can hardly assert that this is the sole implication.

¹ "He that giveth" might refer to an official almoner, and "he that showeth mercy" to an official superintendent of discipline. But the whole turn of the phrases seems rather to have reference to the private exercise of Christian virtues.

“ teachers ” ; of these we shall hear more shortly. Next come “ miracles ” and “ gifts of healing ” ; these terms probably denote no official class ; some churches may have had professional miracle-workers, professional guilds of medical men, or miraculous healers ; but such gifts can only have been rare, and, where they existed, would probably be concurrent with other endowments ; at any rate, for our purpose, their significance may be disregarded. “ Helps ” and “ governments ” are vague terms that signify any sort of general capacity for service and administration. “ Speaking with tongues ” and (verse 30) “ interpretation of tongues ” were common phenomena in the earliest Church ; but, if they ever produced an official class, it did not survive, as the miraculous endowments faded into insignificance.

In Ephesians iv. 7, 11, 12, the list is shorter, and differs slightly from the list just considered. The terms “ apostle,” “ prophet ” and “ teacher,” reappear ; but “ evangelists,” and “ pastors,” are also mentioned. The “ pastors ” would possibly be people charged with functions of superintendence. The “ evangelists,” so far as we can deduce from later literature, were itinerant teachers of Gospel facts, though from Acts xxi.

8; 2 Timothy iv. 5, it seems that some had a settled dwelling-place, and did not travel.¹ Their work, and their position, were less authoritative than that of "apostles"; on the other hand, the "teachers" apparently remained usually in one place.

For our purpose, therefore, we need only consider the work of apostles, prophets, and teachers (including the evangelists). In neither of these lists is there any definite mention of bishops, presbyters, or deacons; but we know that the words did exist, at least in some churches, as titles of office, or descriptions of function. We are thus enabled to classify roughly the offices in the early Church under two heads: (1) The prophetic ministry; (2) The local ministry. The former class is often called the "charismatic" ministry, but the restriction thus implied is mistaken. The work which the latter class had to do was equally recognised as the result of a *χάρισμα*, or gift of grace. St Paul, as we saw, includes the gifts for help and government among the gifts of the Spirit. And there can be no question whatsoever that work of special administration was considered to require divine

¹ See Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. *Evangelist*.

inspiration, as much as the work of preaching or teaching.

The two classes, it must be remembered, would often overlap; local officials would naturally be chosen, so far as possible, from those who possessed the prophetic gift. Thus the Seven were local officials, and yet they were to be qualified as "full of the Spirit" (Acts vi. 3); and two at least of them, Stephen and Philip, preached in public. Thus too the *Didaché*¹ (xv. 1, 2) says: "Elect for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men that are meek and not lovers of money, and true and approved. For they themselves also minister unto you the ministry of prophets and teachers. Therefore, disregard them not; for it is they that are the honoured ones among you, with the prophets and teachers."² Our division, there-

¹ Most scholars admit that the *Didaché* can scarcely come from a time posterior to 100 A.D. But Dr J. W. Thirtle (*Intern. Journ. of Apocrypha*, April 1909) suggests that it may be a later work, written to re-state earlier ideas and teaching, as an antidote to developments which vexed the author. In either case the conditions outlined in the book must be taken to be in general of a primitive type. My quotations from it are taken from Mr G. C. Allen's translation, published by the Astolat Press.

² The *Didaché* may possibly not be thoroughly representative of normal Church life, but yet its testimony cannot be

fore, is one of functions, not of men ; but, with this proviso, it may prove useful.

The prophetic ministry is the ministry of the The Prophetic Ministry. " Word of God," which in Acts vi. 2 the Twelve claim as their special concern. Under this heading the chief classes, as we have seen, are those of apostles, prophets, and teachers. So far as we know, these were all alike, in that they were men conscious of an immediate and personal

entirely overlooked ; and, in the general dearth of decisive evidence, this passage is of extreme value for any reconstruction of early Church organisation. The allusion to " election " suggests that the Church had a voice in the appointment of its officers, though it does not exclude the possibility of formal ordination, after Church election. Obviously some were inclined to disregard the ministry of bishops and deacons, in comparison with that of prophets and teachers, because the former officers seemed to discharge less important and spiritual functions. In discouraging this tendency, the author emphasises the work which the bishops and deacons do, and asserts its spiritual character. If it had been a universal Church principle from the very beginning, that none should minister publicly, save those who had been ordained by the Apostles, or by men whom the Apostles had ordained ; if the grace of ordained ministry had been universally recognised, as derived through a definite succession of men who had received Apostolic ordination, is it conceivable that the author would not have mentioned this as one reason for respecting the officers, that he would not have reminded his Christian correspondents that the bishops and deacons had received the special grace of Orders, by Apostolic succession ? But he only mentions their moral qualifications, and the spiritual work which they perform.

vocation from God to speak His Word. We have occasional traces of human appointment in their case ; as has been said, it is probable that their authority required some sort of public recognition, in order to be properly accredited ; and it is obvious that sometimes they received a formal commission for their work. This practice might even have been usual.¹ The prophetic ministry seems to have been acknowledged to possess a universal scope, and not to be limited to a single Church (Ephesians ii. 20). Thus, for instance, if a prophet visited a strange Church, and his credentials were good, or his word spoken with power, he would be accepted by that Church as a proper minister of the word (Acts xi. 27 ; xv. 32 ; xxi. 10). But with all, apostles, prophets,

¹ Thus Paul and Barnabas received a formal commission in Acts xiii. 3 ; Timothy was formally ordained, probably to accompany St Paul (1 Timothy iv. 14), and may have held the position of an evangelist (2 Timothy iv. 5). Philip, who is called an evangelist (Acts xxi. 8), had been ordained (Acts vi. 6), though not to evangelistic work. Matthias had in some sense been commissioned by the Church (Acts i. 26). But there is no proof that the prophetic commission had *always* to be given by *Apostolic* imposition of hands, nor necessarily by imposition of hands at all. Our evidence is totally insufficient to establish any universal principle in the matter ; and all the presumptions are against any universal principle of formal ordination, in the early days before system was developed.

or teachers, any influence which they might have, would mainly depend upon their personal qualities or success. The authority of some would be very great ; like St Paul, they would be real master-builders ; others might be no more than popular preachers. In any case, however, a Church considered itself at liberty to test the genuineness of the commission of any who wished to speak to it. Thus, the Didaché (xii. 1) says, " Let everyone that cometh in the name of the Lord be received ; and then, after ye have tested him, ye shall know him." So the testing of those who called themselves " Apostles " is commended in Revelation ii. 2. In Galatians i. 8, it is implied that the Church has a right to test the message which it is asked to hear. Even St Paul has to assert himself against those who disputed his commission (1 Corinthians ix. 1, 2 ; 2 Corinthians iii. 1, 2) ; and his statements make it clear, that some at least were in the practice of carrying " letters of commendation " with them. Again in the Didaché (xi.) definite tests are suggested for apostles, as for prophets and teachers. " Whosoever shall come and teach you all these things that have been aforesaid, receive him ; but if the teacher . . . teach

another doctrine so as to overthrow it, hearken not to him ; but if he so teach as to increase righteousness and knowledge of the Lord, receive him as the Lord.¹ And concerning the apostles and prophets, according to the decree of the Gospel, so do ye ; but let any apostle that cometh unto you be received as the Lord ; howbeit he shall abide but one day ; but, if there be need, the next day also ; but, if he abide three days, he is a false prophet.² And let not the apostle, when he goeth forth, take anything save bread to last until the place where he next sojourneth. But, if he ask for money, he is a false prophet. . . . Not everyone that speaketh in the spirit is a prophet, except he have the ways of the Lord. Therefore by their ways shall the false prophet, and the prophet, be known. . . . And if any prophet that teacheth the truth doeth not the thing that he teacheth, he is a false prophet. . . . Whosoever shall say in the spirit, give me money or any other things, ye shall not hearken unto him ; but if he bid you give concerning others that are in need, let no man judge him.” Tests

¹ Mark the test by results and by the moral character of the work done.

² Note that “apostle” and “prophet” are here used as synonyms.

for prophets are also alluded to in the New Testament; *e.g.*, 1 Thessalonians v. 19-21; 1 Corinthians xii. 3; 1 John iv. 1. We hear less in the New Testament about teachers; but it is almost inevitable to suppose that they too were liable to test by those among whom they wished to teach; and indeed it is scarcely credible of that age, as it ought to be incredible of every age, that anyone who desired was allowed to teach in public, without some guarantee that he believed what he taught, and knew what he had to teach. We can safely affirm that all classes of the prophetic ministry were liable to test, and consequently to rejection, if their message seemed untrue, or unfruitful, or hypocritical. No question of official position arose; the grace of the minister was held to be proved by the work he did, and this was, if not the only, at least the only ultimately valid proof.

To draw any hard and fast line between the three classes of the prophetic ministry is practically impossible. The names are applied almost indiscriminately. Some would reserve the title of "Apostle" to those who acted as missionaries to unbelievers, regarding the "prophets" as men who worked within the Christian community.

But the distinction can hardly be sustained; prophets and evangelists certainly acted sometimes as itinerant missionaries. The three terms call severally for brief consideration.

Apostles.

The term "Apostle" was probably restricted, at first, to the Twelve (Acts i. 26); but it was inevitable that the word, which in Greek means simply "messenger" or "delegate," should soon acquire a wider denotation. It would be a natural name for any who acted as messengers in any sense, whether more or less dignified. In the case of the Twelve, it would convey a special meaning; and St Paul claims to be an Apostle in the same sense. But the term is very loosely used in the New Testament. Thus in Acts xiv. 4, Barnabas is coupled as an Apostle with Paul. In Romans xvi. 7, Andronicus and Junias are described as "of note among the Apostles."¹ In Philippians ii. 25, Epaphroditus is called the "Apostle" of the Philippians. In 2 Corinthians viii. 23, some are called "Apostles of the Churches." In 1 Corinthians xv. 5-9, we find first a mention of the Twelve, then of James, then of "all the Apostles," as if distinguished from the smaller body of the Twelve, then of

¹ See Sanday and Headlam's note *ad loc.*

St Paul, who claims for himself the title of "Apostle." In fact, anybody might be called an apostle who acted as a messenger, whether he were a noted missionary, or merely the delegate of a Church. Broadly speaking, however, the term, used without qualification, came to be applied mainly to those who acted as itinerant preachers; whether they did so in response to an inward call, or also carried "letters of commendation" from a Church or an individual, or had received a formal commission.

The "prophet" was one who declared God's Prophets. will, whether in ecstatic utterance, or in ordinary language. Thus in theory anybody who claimed to speak under inspiration had a right to the title. But, in practice, the title was restricted to those who spoke "in the spirit," in the technical sense of that phrase, *i.e.* by utterance which, without rising to the level of continuous preaching, was yet inspired by God; and which was more or less ecstatic in character. The New Testament tells us little that is definite about the prophets; but, in later times, they certainly had very great influence. And a passage in the Didaché (xiii. 3, 4) allows us to infer that they sometimes acted as almoners. "All the firstfruits of the

produce of wine-fat and threshing-floor, oxen and sheep, shalt thou take and give, even the firstfruits, unto the prophets, for they are your high priests ; but, if ye have no prophet, give them unto the poor."

Teachers.

The "teachers" would chiefly be those who expounded the Scriptures and instructed catechumens publicly or privately. Such perhaps would be the work of Priscilla and Aquila in the case of Apollos (Acts xviii. 26). They are declared to deserve support in the *Didaché* (xiii. 1, 2) : "Every prophet that is willing to settle among you is worthy of his food. In like manner a true teacher is himself also worthy, even as the labourer, of his food."

The Local Ministry.

In addition to the prophetic ministry, the churches would need local officials ; though, as has been remarked, these local officials would probably be selected, where it was possible, from those who possessed the prophetic gift. The arrangements of the local ministry were probably very fluid, and the system would not be uniform everywhere. It is likely that, at first, the work was done by volunteers (as seems to be the case with the house of Stephanas in 1 Corinthians xvi. 15) ; and it would be accepted

by the Church as a work of goodwill (*cf.* 1 Thessalonians v. 12, 13). But in time, such work would inevitably become more official in character. It would include administration, and probably a certain amount of indefinite pastoral work, as is implied in the passage of 1 Thessalonians just referred to. St Paul may be giving a rough description of it under the phrase "helps" and "governments" in 1 Corinthians xii. 28.

We find the following titles for those who may be supposed to have done this work.

(1) *Presbyters* or *elders*. We have already *Presbyters*. considered the passages in Acts, which give us some hint of the functions discharged by the Jerusalem presbyters.¹ In Acts xx. 28 the Ephesian presbyters are called "overseers" or "bishops." In James v. 14 we find that the presbyters are to be called to administer unction to the sick. In 1 Timothy v. 17 presbyters are described as "ruling"; and in 1 Peter v. 1, 2 they are charged with pastoral work and general oversight. Other passages allude to them, without giving any definition of their functions. We must remember, however, that in

¹ See chapter iii.

some passages the word may only mean "the elder Christians," without being a special title.

Deacons.

(2) *Deacons*. Besides mere mention in a few places, we are given the qualifications for their office in 1 Timothy iii. 8, ff. The qualities enumerated are mostly moral, and no clue is given to the duties which the deacons would have to perform. Perhaps they had to minister material relief, but we can have no certainty on the point.

Bishops.

(3) *Bishops*. The qualifications required are stated in 1 Timothy iii. 1 ff., and a somewhat similar list is given in Titus i. 7, ff. It seems clear, however, that in these passages the "bishops" are merely the presbyters under another title. Unless we accept this view, we should be faced with the remarkable fact that Timothy receives no directions as to the necessary qualifications for the presbyterate, although from 1 Timothy v. 1 we can infer that such officers did exist, and were in a position of "rule." In the second passage it is even more certain that "bishop" and "presbyter" are used as synonyms. "That thou shouldest appoint elders . . . if any man is blameless . . . for the bishop must be blameless" (Titus i. 5, ff). Thus from these passages we may infer that the presbyters, or bishops,

would be required to entertain strangers, to exhort and convince; though apparently they were not all expected to teach (*cf.* 1 Timothy v. 17). And their position must have been in some sense public and representative; for they are to have "a good testimony from without,"¹ *i.e.* to be well-reputed among outsiders.

It is plain then that, side by side with the prophetic ministry, there existed also a twofold local ministry, consisting of presbyters and deacons, though we cannot exactly apportion their several functions. The question, however, has been much debated, whether all the presbyters were bishops, or only some of them had special functions of oversight, which would enable them to be called bishops, and to stand in a superior position to the other presbyters. On this question scholars have been divided in opinion. With trifling variations in detail, Lightfoot, Hort, and Loofs, agree that the term *ἐπίσκοπος* is, in Apostolic times, a mere description of presbyteral work; that the presbyters, where we hear of them, were all bishops, and therefore probably directed the affairs of their church, possibly taught, and acted, or came in time to act, as

¹ 1 Timothy iii. 7.

presidents in public worship. On the other hand, Hatch and Harnack distinguish between the two offices, and maintain that, whilst the presbyters had the supervision of discipline and morals, the bishops were separate officers, charged with the management of finance, and therefore probably with the presidency of worship; since the offering of alms was an important portion of Christian worship. To decide with any certainty between these conflicting views is almost impossible; and the system may not have been the same in all churches. But the actual New Testament evidence gives us no sign that there was any separate order of bishops, as distinguished from presbyters. Thus the passage in 1 Peter v. 1, 2 seems to know of no local office of oversight distinct from the presbyterate, and in Revelation iv. 4, 10; v. 5, 6, 8 the elders are pictured in a position of supreme honour. The same is the impression produced from a perusal of the earliest uncanonical literature, such as the Didaché or the Epistle of Clement. Thus the Didaché mentions bishops and deacons, but knows nothing of presbyters; the "bishops" in that book must be the same as presbyters. But our evidence is so defective

that a cautious conclusion is alone legitimate ; it may be that, in some places, the presbyterial officers were called bishops, and not presbyters ; it may be that, in other places, some presbyters, and not all, were recognised as having special duties of oversight and were called distinctively " bishops " ; but our evidence tends to the inference that, in the Apostolic age, there were only two orders of local ministry, the order of presbyter-bishops, and the order of deacons.

We have found then (1) a prophetic ministry, Conclusion. some members of which act in some sort as an itinerant episcopate ; (2) a local ministry of two orders. There is scarcely a hint, in the early age, of a diocesan or monarchical episcopate. James is virtually bishop of Jerusalem without the title, but his position is unique. Timothy and Titus hold a paramount local charge, but it is only for a special object. Timothy is at Ephesus to deal with a crisis (1 Timothy i. 3, 4 ; iv. 13), but only till St Paul comes ; or, according to the second Epistle (2 Timothy iv. 9), till he can rejoin St Paul. Titus is charged with a special work of organisation in Crete (Titus i. 5), and is expected to rejoin St Paul, on the arrival of Artemas or Tychicus (Titus iii. 12). So far

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as there is any episcopal oversight in these cases, it belongs to the writer of the Epistles.

It is very likely that the greater Apostles were looked up to with special reverence, particularly by the churches which they had founded ; and that their voice would carry weight in matters affecting the several churches. But it seems clear that the dividing line between the Apostolate and other forms of ministry was quite indefinite. The only body, which might have claimed a special prerogative, and an exclusive position, was the Twelve ; and we find men like Paul, James and Barnabas, acting on terms of avowed equality with the Twelve, whilst many lesser men are called "Apostles," and even in one case "of note among the Apostles." There is no evidence for the supposition that the Apostles (restricting that term to the Twelve, and, by special provision, to St Paul) were regarded as the only conduits of a grace, which they must confer before public office could be undertaken,¹ or that nobody could minister, unless he had been ordained by an Apostle, or one whom the Apostles themselves had ordained. Indeed a

¹ The passage in Acts viii. 18 is frequently quoted or misquoted to support this view ; but it is too flimsy to bear the

special and exclusive "grace of Orders" is not yet hinted at; "there is no rigid system by which the performance of sacred rites is the exclusive function of a mediatorial class, the definition of doctrine the prerogative of a clerical order." This is a later idea, and history gives us no warrant for referring it back to Apostolic times. On the other hand, it is quite certain that, in practice at least, all ministerial office, whether prophetic or local, needed to receive in some way the sanction of the Church. The Church, as the guardian and steward of Christian order and truth and life, judged all ministers and ministrations, and sanctioned or rejected them, according as their work conduced, or did not conduce, to preserve and develop the treasures which it guarded; this test could be applied formally or informally, by commission before ministerial work was undertaken, or by recognition of ministerial work, after it had been voluntarily undertaken. In applying this test, the Church superstructure. Simon saw that the Holy Ghost was in that case given by Apostolic imposition of hands. That is no sufficient proof that it was the universal view of the Church, that the Holy Ghost could be given in no case save by the laying-on of the Apostles' hands. And the act in this context was not one of Ordination to ministry, but of Confirmation to membership.

or churches would naturally tend to be guided by the recognised leaders ; but the application of tests was the Church's concern, and not the exclusive privilege of the Church's leaders.

In process of time and reflection, the Church, under the direction of God's Spirit, came to the view that the proper representatives of the corporate body were its acknowledged officers ; the informal test by an estimate of results was stereotyped into the formal test of official trial and ordination ; and the function of ordination was entrusted by the Church to its chiefs, because that system was expected to provide the best guarantee for a continuation of duly-tested officers, and for the proper discharge of ministerial duties, and to furnish the best security for the continuity of Church life, and for the preservation of Catholic truth. Herein lies an historical theory of " Apostolic succession " ; the succession is one of Church life and orderly development. It is not to be placed in an external sequence of ordained ministers, reaching without interruption back to the Apostles. For such a sequence cannot be traced, and is contrary to all the historical probabilities. Even the modified form of this theory, which asserts that all Orders were

always conferred "from above" is not tenable except on a very guarded acceptance of the terms. The grace of ministry was always held to come from God; the commission to use that grace in the Church came from the Church. The Church in its actions was naturally influenced by its leaders, and their appointment was regarded as one of the best methods, perhaps as the normal method, by which the Church could confer its commission. But that influence, in early times, was moral and personal rather than official; the leaders themselves were accountable to the Church for their actions; and much informality must have existed, side by side with what would have been regarded as the obvious practice to follow, wherever possible. We cannot find sufficient indications to justify any theory, which would assert that the Apostolic churches considered the ministerial grace to flow in a stream, of which the Twelve and the Twelve alone were the sources; or that all Church officials were universally and indispensably bound to receive a formal commission from existing officials, as an essential condition of valid office.

CHAPTER VI

THE THREEFOLD MINISTRY

Lines of
Develop-
ment.

WE find the theory of a threefold ministry and a monarchical episcopate firmly established in the greater portion of the Christian world by about 150 A.D., or a little later. But it is impossible to make any definite statement of the method by which the alteration was effected. Probably there was no single definite method that operated everywhere. It is more likely that, in various churches, various circumstances arose which seemed to necessitate a tightening of the bonds of system; and it was scarcely avoidable that at that time the best system should be conceived under the form of a monarchy, with subordinate gradations of rank. The developed organisation of the Christian Church reflects, in broad outline, the system of the Roman Empire.¹ The theory of the Empire

¹ Just as the vestments of the Church ministers reflected the dress of Roman civic officials.

was that the Emperor was the president of the Senate, a senator himself, "*primus inter pares*." The case was very different in practice, but the early Emperors were generally most careful to emphasise the theory when their practice was most alien to it.

Some of the lines, along which the Christian system would gradually develop in a monarchical and hierarchical direction, would be these :—

(1) As the Church extended its sphere of influence, the spiritual presidency of its leaders, kept up by letters and visits, would no longer suffice to cope with the wider requirements. The need of leadership would be manifest, and the churches could not afford to be content with its intermittent exercise.

(2) The prophetic ministry would, in time, pass more and more to the local officials. As we have seen reason to suppose, the local ministers would tend to be chosen from those who possessed the prophetic gift ; and thus the two classes would gradually merge into one.

(3) The desire to preserve a pure Christian tradition would, as time went on, cause the churches to lay more emphasis upon the education of Christian teachers and catechists ; and, as the

care for Christian training became more prominent, more formality would necessarily be observed in the appointment of teachers and preachers and evangelists and apostles. Of the growing carefulness in this matter a distinct sign is found in 2 Timothy ii. 2. And Jerome roundly asserts that bishops were appointed as a remedy against schism.¹

(4) As false prophets arose, and fraud became more lucrative, the difficulty of distinguishing between true and false would cause the compilation of a liturgy for use in public worship, and especially at the Eucharist. One man would, for the sake of convenience, be charged with ministerial rights in worship on behalf of the assembly, and public service would be regulated ; this process would be accelerated as soon as Church buildings arose and Church worship became congregational rather than domestic in character. So we have in Justin² the mention of ὁ προεστώς, the president, who preaches and blesses the elements at the Eucharistic service, as apparently a definite and recognised official.

¹ Jerome, *Commentary on Titus*, i. 7.

² Justin, *Apol.* i. 65, 67 ; written about 150 A.D. His account is deliberately untechnical, as it is intended for heathen readers.

And the Didaché seems to represent an intermediate stage; for, after prescribing a fixed form of liturgy (ix. x.), it ends with the significant phrase, "But suffer the prophets to give thanks as they desire."

(5) The exercise of discipline would need to be more organised; as the churches grew and persecution increased, some definite authority in this department would be required.

(6) The desire to preserve external unity between the separate churches would lead to the setting-up, by each, of one distinctive officer, to act as its representative.¹ As Ramsay insists, somebody would be wanted to correspond on behalf of a church, and to entertain its visitors.

¹ Some have been inclined to conjecture that the "angels" ("angel" in Greek means simply "messenger") of the Seven Churches, to whom the book of Revelation is addressed, are such public representatives. This, however, seems very doubtful. So far as anybody is "bishop" of the Seven Churches, it is the writer of the book. The Angels of the Churches are rather their figurative spirits or counterparts. They correspond for instance to the Genius of Rome, which was the object (with the Emperor) of provincial worship, in Asia Minor and elsewhere; and to the tutelary gods or goddesses of the cities, who were identified with the spirit of the cities with which they were severally associated, and were placed on the cities' coins as their figurative symbols or representatives. Cf. Ramsay, *Letters to the Seven Churches*, chapter vi. *ad fin.*

In such practical ways ¹ the need for a single central authority would become patent to the various churches. As the Apostles disappeared, leaders would be required; the local churches might feel disinclined to accept leaders from elsewhere; and in such circumstances, the most natural course for them to take was to elevate one of their presbyter-bishops to pre-eminence, and set him apart as the supreme ἐπίσκοπος or overseer. A tradition, which seems to be authentic, points to St John ² as the chief influence in this change within the region of Asia Minor; and the type he set may have served as an ex-

¹ The theoretical justification for the developed system would come later. The earlier sub-Apostolic writers treat of the continuity of Church life under the formula of succession; they maintain a derivation of spiritual gifts, not through an exclusive class of ordained ministers, but through Church life, preserved and continued under the safeguard of a ministerial system, which has grown by orderly development. In later writers, this view was made more precise and mechanical; the conception of a representative ministry, as an organ of the corporate grace, was transformed into the conception of an exclusive ministry, as a channel of a special grace; and so came the clear-cut theory of an Apostolic succession preserved in the ministry alone. Herein we find the explanation of the contrast between the absence, in early records, of any such principle of succession, and the insistence, in later writers, on that principle to its fullest extent. The transitional epoch is marked by the earliest sub-Apostolic writings.

² Cf. Euseb., *H. E.* iii. 23.

ample to other districts. But, however this may be, the change seems gradually to have been made everywhere, though not everywhere at the same time, and to have been made without dislocation. At any rate, no record of any early controversy on the point has reached us. The revolt of the Montanists, in the third century, was indeed, in some sense, against the authority of bishops and the office of the priests ; but it was really a protest against a false sacerdotalism, in the interests of a more democratic view of spiritual gifts. In many respects this protest was of value ; and similar protests have often been of value, where they have been made ; thus, for instance, revivalist movements have sometimes done a useful work in recalling attention to the possibility, open to every Christian, of direct spiritual contact with God, at times when this possibility was in danger of being forgotten. But the fault of such movements is usually the exaggeration of view, to which partisans of neglected truths are liable, and the temerity with which the leaders of these movements or their followers sometimes relinquish all notion of the Church as an historic institution. Montanism, for instance, would have tended to the

dissolution of all order, in favour of a miraculously-endowed ministry, subject to no tests, and guarded by no restrictions. It attempted to hark back to Apostolic usages, without any of the safeguards which the Apostolic time had possessed ; it was essentially unhistorical and anarchical ; and the Church's refusal to sanction the movement was thoroughly justified.

Gradually, therefore, and naturally, a three-fold ministry arose as a definite profession ; and, with this alteration, formal ordination became the regular rule. Of such ordination we have but the smallest traces in the New Testament. The references in Acts vi. 6 ; xiv. 23 have already been noticed. The act recorded in 1 Timothy i. 18 ; iv. 14 ; 2 Timothy i. 6 was probably a special and exceptional ceremony, by which Timothy was solemnly set apart as St Paul's companion ; it is analogous to the act recorded in Acts xiii. 3. The vague phrase in 1 Timothy v. 22, "Lay hands hastily on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins," part of which has been embodied in one of the English Church's Ember prayers, may refer to the ordination of ministers ; though many scholars consider it to be rather

an allusion to the blessing of a received penitent.

However, in time, the first freshness of un-ordered enthusiasm inevitably passed away ; in place of the informal system of the Apostolic age, we find a formal professional ministry, with a definite theory of sacramental grace ; just as, in addition to the early consciousness of personal relation to God, we find a creed, a form of sound words, to which assent is required. It is gratuitously unreasonable to declare, that these alterations necessarily involved a loss of the early Christian spirit. To some extent the fact of loss is undeniable ; indeed such loss was quite inevitable, as the Church grew in numbers, and hypocritical conversions became possible. But the authentic records of Christian martyrdom are, by themselves, enough to prove that the spirit of genuine living Christianity was not lost or sterilised. All that happened was that, as the Church became more conscious of the treasures entrusted to it, and of the grace which it had to steward, it became more keenly anxious that the earthen vessels, in which it had to hold those treasures and that grace, should be as good and as durable as possible. Without losing the

Christian spirit, or disparaging informal endowments of grace, it yet desired to provide, for normal use, the most suitable form in which that spirit could be manifested. The system of ministry, which, by the Divine guidance, it was moved to stereotype for that object, was the system of the threefold ministry; just as it stereotyped its doctrine in the articles of the Christian Creeds. And on us, therefore, so long as they perform their function, it is incumbent to cherish that ministry and those creeds as the gift of Divine wisdom, as the proved guarantee of good order, and the proved safeguards of true Christian life, discipline and faith.

The English
Church and
the Papacy.

It may be asked—and the question is quite reasonable—how far this theory can be applied to the question of the English Church's relation to the Papacy. It may be argued that, if we are to justify the existence of the threefold ministry by a conception of divinely-guided Church development, we ought logically to go further, and admit the claims of the Papacy on the same grounds. If the threefold ministry developed naturally, the Papacy in later time developed just as naturally. It is not enough to answer this argument by the vituperative methods of

some partisan controversialists ; however impressive to the emotions, such methods are not satisfying to the intelligence. Some more adequate reply must be given, and it is to be found in the history of the Papacy and its present attitude. The Pope's supreme power arose in response to undoubted necessities. Somebody was needed to preside at Church Councils, and to decide disputes between conflicting bishops ; and the Bishop of Rome was the obvious person on whom the position should be conferred. The absence in the East of the Roman Emperor forced the Western world to look elsewhere for supreme guidance and protection ; and the Bishop of the greatest Western city seemed the only person to look to. Thus the Papal power arose by perfectly natural development ; protests against it were not entirely unknown in early times,¹ but, as the need for a central authority increased, the protests died into silence. And no impartial student can doubt that, during the early ages of Papal predominance, the Papacy did, on the whole, justify itself in the eyes of God and of history. In spite of many mistakes and many false claims, it did a work in those ages

¹ *E.g.*, in the time of Cyprian and Firmilian.

which nothing else could have done ; it held Christendom together ; it kept the Christian Church alive and strong, despite secular ruin on every side ; it found time to spread the Gospel, and to establish a strong Christian society throughout the length and breadth of Western Europe. The great Popes of that time, such as Gregory, were in fact real Vicars of Christ ; they adorned their office and “made the garment of holiness honourable.” And, so long as English people choose to remember their own past history, so long should names like Augustine and Theodore serve to remind them of the inestimable debt which they owe to Rome. Whilst the Papal primacy did its work well, it deserved the obedience which it received ; it had the divine right of service to support its claim.

But the Papacy fell from its high estate ; weak and unworthy Popes degraded its spiritual efficacy ; strong but worldly Popes metamorphosed the Roman see into a secular kingdom. Thus it lost the rights which its spiritual usefulness had given to it ; and, in proportion as that claim became less possible to be maintained, it began to emphasise other and more dubious claims, and to support them by authorising forgeries

and untruths. In time the Christian conscience of a large part of Europe woke up to the fact that the power of the Popes had ceased to be a serviceable safeguard for the spirit of Christianity. At the Reformation the Papacy was tried and found wanting; as in the English Revolution the Monarchy was tried and found wanting. The English Monarchy was not impervious to reform; and, at the present time, its "Divine right" to our obedience and reverence lies in the services which it renders to the national life. The Papacy, on the other hand, showed then, and shows still, no signs of real reformation, with a view to meeting the necessities of the new age.¹ Thus the English Church was justified in shaking off its allegiance to the Bishop of Rome, and is still justified in refusing to renew that relation. Whilst the

¹ It is not to be denied that the Roman system is in practice capable, and abundantly capable, of producing the fruits of good and holy life. But, after all, a system cannot be divorced entirely from its theory; nor can its moral results be considered entirely apart from its intellectual tendencies. A reverence for all truth, a respect for spiritual freedom, are Christian virtues, as much as the search for holiness; or more accurately, are constitutive elements in that search. And it is a deplorable fact, that the official policy of the Roman Church not only pays little regard to such important departments of Christian perfection, but has committed itself to an unspiritual conception of "the Kingdom of God."

Papacy did its work well, the English Church owed and paid obedience to it. When it ceased to perform its function properly, that obedience was rightly and justly withdrawn.

The English
Church and
Dissent.

The same principle can be applied in considering the relations between Episcopacy and Dissent in England. The justification for much of the Nonconformity, which arose and increased in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was the fact that English Episcopacy did not, on the whole, do its work well, and provide comprehensively for the spiritual needs of the nation.¹ And, if it had continued to be untrue to its duty, it is arguable that the English people would have been in the right to reject it altogether, as they had rejected the Papal authority. But the nineteenth century has shown a great revival, in the English Episcopate and in the English Church, of the sense of its vocation. And the proper ground, upon which we can now support the Anglican system, is that it is true to its

¹ I am not denying that less worthy motives were at work here, as in the Reformation. But such movements cannot prosper, if they are entirely based on unworthy motives; if a counsel or a work be "of men," it will come to nought. And in both cases, the primary motive which animated most of the agitation was spiritually noble.

function ; it does prove of real Christian usefulness, as a guarantee of Christian order, life, and truth ; and it is, at the very least, unwise to give up or continue to remain outside a system which has passed the test of ages, so long as that system works satisfactorily. No doubt it may be replied that the Nonconformist systems also work well, and the assertion is one which claims unhesitating assent. But the effect of the competition of sects upon the corporate life of Christendom surely demands consideration. If the spirit of sectarianism could be abolished, the deleterious results of such competition would be greatly diminished. But the existence of sects seems too easily to produce the spirit of sectarianism. Moreover, the institutional character of the Church is an asset, which should not lightly be renounced, nor for any but overwhelming reasons. There is surely some value in the conception of the One Body ; and the great weakness of the Nonconformist position is that it disparages the external symbols of unity, and has deliberately cut itself off from an historical system, which has passed the test of ages and still justifies itself by an appeal to Apostolic principles. Furthermore, it is possible to point out, without any

failure of courtesy, that Nonconformist systems, in spite of their prodigious success in many respects, have not proved, in practice, a good safeguard for the preservation of Christian truth and stable Christian order. Dissent in England appears to have a fatal disposition towards the multiplication of centrifugal tendencies. A Nemesis seems to befall those bodies which have overtly and entirely severed themselves from historic antiquity, and thrown off the protection of approved formularies and ancient order. Such action has perhaps brought certain compensations; but it may be questioned whether the balance is not on the side of disadvantage. The English Church has its parties; even the Roman Church is not such a paradise of unanimity as its defenders would make it appear to be; but there is a great gulf between difference of opinion within a body, and complete severance from the body. And, though it is necessary to preserve the Christian tradition free from adulteration, and Christian unity free from any tendency to tyranny, it is also necessary to preserve the tradition complete and un mutilated, and the unity firm and authoritative. Any project of reunion between the English Church and the

English Dissenters must necessarily involve a certain amount of accommodation, a certain liberality of interpretation, and a spirit of genuine desire for harmony. But it will be a vain project, unless both sides are equally bent on laying, as a basis, not only a common spirit of Christian morals, but also a common regard for Christian truth and essential doctrine, and a common respect for Christian order and historic continuity. For such a consummation we must all pray.

If then, since the Anglican system has revived Reunion. and is doing its work well, Nonconformity has lost at least one main cause for a continuance in separation, ought there to be any wish for eventual reunion of the English Church with Rome? To this question there can be none but an affirmative answer. If the Papacy were to reform itself, and to stand forward once more as the visible centre of spiritual Christian unity, as the avowed leader of progressive Christian thought, as the loyal guardian of orderly Christian freedom,¹ no cause

¹ These phrases may suffice perhaps as a further explanation of what I mean by the "results" of a system, and by such a phrase as "Christian usefulness." It implies very much more than the mere production of Christian morality in individuals. The results of a Christian system must be tested by its bearing upon cosmic problems, if it claims to be truly Catholic.

could justify a perpetuation of the division. Unquestionably the Roman Church would have to give up much, to which, at present, it seems to cling with fierce attachment, much which seems to its critics not only immoral and unspiritual, but also definitely false. There seems no present likelihood of such concessions on its part ; the more is the pity ; but, if it did make them, there appears to be no legitimate ground on which English Christians could refuse to respect the Papacy, as possessing within Christendom a primacy, not in power and privilege, but in dignity and historical prestige, which would entitle it to the respect of every Christian believer. Even as it is, while we must notice and deplore the errors which the Vatican still countenances and authorises, we are putting ourselves in the wrong, if we immoderately denounce it in language which no principle of Christian truth or charity can justify. It is, at the least, the survival of a system which once performed incalculable services to Christendom, and did great work for Christ ; even yet, with all the faults of its official policy, some departments of its work, when fairly tested, can compete honourably with the efforts of any other Christian bodies in

the world.¹ And it might conceivably, under certain circumstances, once more give a full justification of its existence, and once more be entitled to our reverence and affection; even as Episcopacy in England has undoubtedly strengthened, and seems likely to strengthen yet further, its right to the suffrages of Christians.

“By their fruits ye shall know them.” This Conclusion. is, after all, as we have seen, St Paul’s own final test. In his view the principal and convincing sign, that his ministry was of Divine ordination, was its production of Christian fruit. And, surely, this is ultimately the only worthy theory of sacerdotalism, the only worthy conception of a divinely-ordained ministry. A divine society can live neither upon its past history, nor upon its present externals. A Christian Church cannot safely base its claims upon any unspiritual hypothesis of mechanically transmitted grace, especially when those hypotheses are artificial and destitute of proper historical foundation. When an historic system continues, or begins again, to perform its functions adequately, it is a real danger and a real sin to promote or perpetuate any violent dislocation

¹ I need only point to its missionary work as one example.

from that system ; the advantages of novelty cannot compensate for the disadvantages of unnecessary, or unnecessarily protracted schism. But the test of " results," in the widest sense of the word, is the final test, whether a system shall continue to be regarded as divinely ordained, or whether we must infer that the Providence, which established it, is also superseding it. The real grace of a ministerial system is the grace of useful Christian leadership and service. The true Apostolic succession in the Church resides in the Church life, and not in the Church officials, except as commissioned organs of Church life. " The Christian society is prior to the individual ; and continuity of its vital relation to Christ depends on the persistence of the facts of Church life." If an historic system continues to provide fit opportunities for the free development and progress of the Christian Church's spiritual life, and to minister well to the Christian necessities of mankind, for which purposes God brought it into being, by origination or by natural development, then it needs no other proof of its Apostolic derivation or of its divine authorship. If it ceases to do this, then to renounce it, in favour of some other system, may be a divine

duty ; though, if it should again revive its grace of useful service, it might similarly become a divine duty to return to the old system, which had lasted through the centuries, and had the warrant of antiquity and orderly continuity.

CHAPTER VII

PUBLIC WORSHIP IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Days and
Seasons.

THE services of Christian worship, in the earliest Church at Jerusalem, apparently took place on every day alike (Acts ii. 46). But it is obvious that such services could not be regularly attended by all the members of the Christian community, who would have their ordinary avocations to pursue; and it soon became the custom to set apart one day for special worship. The day selected was the first day of the week, probably to distinguish the Christian celebration from the Jewish Sabbath. We find a notice of it in Acts xx. 7; it is recognised as special in 1 Corinthians xvi. 2, and it is called "the Lord's day" in Revelation i. 10. The distinctive observance of this day is found to be universal in the second century; every Church father refers to it; it is mentioned in the *Didaché*¹

¹ "On the Lord's day of the Lord assemble yourselves together and break bread; and give thanks after having confessed also your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure" (*Didaché* xiv.).

as the day for the "breaking of bread," and Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia, circ. 115 A.D., tells the Emperor Trajan¹ that the Christians come together for public worship, "on a specific day," which can hardly be any other than Sunday. Such a weight of testimony makes it certain that the custom dates from the Apostolic age. There is no evidence in the New Testament that to the Lord's Day was attached any significance commemorative of the Resurrection. The early fathers do not regard it as a continuation of the Sabbath, nor base its observance on the fourth commandment. In fact they contrast the two. Justin Martyr² assigns as reasons for its selection, that on that day God dispelled darkness and created the world, and Christ rose from the dead. And its connection with the Resurrection became its prevailing aspect.

There is no New Testament evidence for Christian festal seasons; but the Christian Passover was universally observed by 150 A.D., though with a difference as to the day and the extent of the fast connected with it;³ and the

¹ Pliny, *Epp.* x. 96.

² *Apol.* i. 67.

³ Schaff, *Ante-Nicene Christianity*, § 61.

following fifty days had become an accepted Christian season, under the title of Pentecost, before the second century ended. The other great festivals seem to have come into observance at later dates.

We have seen that, at Jerusalem, the early Christians were scrupulous in attendance at the temple worship; and the three Jewish hours of prayer were observed by some, at least, of them (Acts ii. 1, 15; iii. 1; x. 9). They also had meetings for prayer at private houses, and broke bread "at home."

We can broadly distinguish in the New Testament records two forms of Christian service.

The Public Meeting.

(1) The public meeting, which was not restricted to the believers alone (1 Corinthians xiv. 23, 24); our best evidence for this service is 1 Corinthians xiv., interpreted by other references elsewhere. We find that it was composed of (*a*) *Prayer* (Acts iv. 24), whether led by one man, or joined in by all. The prayer could be either in ordinary language, "with the understanding," or "in a tongue," *i.e.* in the ecstatic utterance of religious emotion; but in the latter case an interpreter of its meaning would be needed. The objects, for which prayer would be offered, would natur-

ally vary. St Paul prescribes petition for the propagation of missionary work (Romans xv. 30; Ephesians vi. 18, 19; Colossians iv. 3; 2 Thessalonians iii. 1); for the civil government and rulers, and mankind generally (1 Timothy ii. 1). St James directs prayer for the sick (James v. 16). St John enjoins intercession for lapsed Christians (1 John v. 16). There is no sign yet of fixed forms of prayer; but we find certain stereotyped formulæ, which seem to have been in general use, such as "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ";¹ or forms of benediction, based on a simple phrase like "The God of peace be with you,"² or "Grace be with you."³

(b) *Praise*. This again might be with the understanding or in a tongue; and from 1 Corinthians xiv. 16, it is possible to conjecture that there may have been some more or less fixed form, as the congregation knew when to say

¹ Found with small differences of phrase in every Pauline Epistle, in both epistles of St Peter, in 2 John, Jude, and Revelation.

² Found, with variants, twice in Romans, in Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Peter, 3 John.

³ Found, with variants, in both epistles to the Corinthians, Thessalonians, and Timothy, in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, Revelation.

“Amen.” There are various germs of doxologies in the New Testament, all based on some simple formula such as “Glory to God,” or “Glory and dominion to Christ.”¹ Combined utterances of praise, in hymn or psalm (Acts xvi. 25; Ephesians v. 19; Colossians iii. 16), were certainly known in New Testament times; and some have professed to be able to find fragments of early hymns in the Pauline Epistles.² Nor should we in this connection forget the canticles of St Luke’s Gospel, which seem to be early Christian hymns; and the great choruses and doxologies of Revelation.

(c) There was probably some *reading from the Scriptures*, and some kind of oral teaching, in the shape of a *homily* or *sermon*. The reading would mainly be from the Septuagint, the Greek edition of the Old Testament. St Paul seems to assume in his epistles that his hearers were familiar with this edition. Oral instruction on the facts of Christ’s life and His sayings must,

¹ Found, with variants, twice in Romans, in Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, both epistles to Timothy, both epistles of St Peter, Hebrews, Revelation.

² They quote Romans xiii. 11, 12, as from an Advent hymn; Ephesians v. 14, as from a penitential hymn; 1 Timothy iii. 16; 2 Timothy ii. 11-13, as from hymns to Christ.

very soon, have been added. In time, however, the Gospels came into liturgical use and superseded any oral traditions and any previous written narratives that may have existed.¹ In Justin Martyr² we find that the reading is from the prophets or from the "memoirs" of the Apostles. It is impossible here to discuss fully the dates of the Four Gospels; but St Mark, the earliest, may come from some time not long after 65 A.D. There is more variety of opinion about St Matthew and St Luke. But very few critics would now place their composition at a date much later than 100 A.D. And there is a great deal to be said in favour of assigning an earlier date to St Luke, and to much of the material, which is incorporated in the Gospel known by St Matthew's name. The question

¹ It seems probable that there were early records of Christ in writing, and that oral tradition was not the only form in which the history of Christ was preserved. The Synoptic Gospels need not necessarily have originated from catechetical manuals, or be derived from sources which were catechetical manuals; they may have been written for private purposes. But in time all catechetical manuals were superseded by the authoritative expositions of Christ's life and sayings, which the Church selected as final, viz., the four Gospels. Cf. Ramsay, *Luke the Physician*; essay 2 on "The oldest written Gospel," *ad fin.*

² *Apol.* i. 67.

of the date of St John's Gospel is far too difficult to be considered here; the book is an interpretation rather than a record, and reads like the production of a man who had undergone a supreme spiritual experience, and desired to leave his record, of what he believed to be its explanation. Hence arises the lack of agreement as to its date. The other books of the New Testament came into liturgical use at various dates in various places; they do not fall within our scope.

One notable omission in the New Testament is the absence of evidence for the use of the Lord's Prayer, unless we can infer such use from the records of its institution. But we find it given at full length in the *Didaché* (viii.), including the concluding doxology, with the precept, "As the Lord commanded in His Gospel, even so pray ye." And it is there ordained to be used three times a day. Weizsäcker infers St Paul's knowledge of the Lord's Prayer from his use of the Aramaic form "*Abba*," for "*Father*," in *Romans* viii. 15; *Galatians* iv. 6, saying that St Paul must have had in mind a well-known formula, which preserved the original language in order to impart peculiar

solemnity. That may be a far-fetched inference ; but there is no reason to deny that the early Christians may have been acquainted with the formula of the Lord's Prayer, even if the New Testament gives no clear proof of it.

This service was open to all. It was a species of mission service, intended for the making of converts, as well as for the edification of believers.

(2) Side by side with this service, we find clear traces of a specific ceremony, which is called The Break-
ing of Bread. " the breaking of bread " or " the Lord's supper." This must have been a private service ; so the *Didaché* states (ix. 5) : " Let none eat or drink of your thanksgiving, but those that have been baptised into the name of the Lord ; for indeed the Lord hath said concerning this, ' Give not that which is holy unto the dogs.' " And so Justin Martyr witnesses (*Apol.* i. 66) : " This food is called among us Eucharist, of which no one may partake but he who believes our teaching to be true, and who has been washed in the bath for remission of sins, and with a view to regeneration, and who lives so as Christ commanded." That this was so at all times is an inevitable supposition, when it is remembered that the Eucharist was, in origin, a common religious

meal of the Christian community, to which each Christian was supposed to bring his share. Its later name was the *Agapé* or love-feast, but that title is only once found in the New Testament (Jude 12). In Acts xx. 7, 11, we see that it was preceded by a discourse, but that is apparently not the case in 1 Corinthians xi. 21, 33.¹ It was an ordinary evening social meal, to which a commemorative act was attached. During the meal, there took place the formal breaking of bread, probably with a prayer of thanks, after the precedent of Christ's action; and all partook of the bread thus blessed (1 Corinthians xi. 26). Probably after the meal was over came the blessing of a cup, from which all then drank (1 Corinthians x. 16). The cup was of wine; and, though we have no New Testament evidence on the point, it is almost certain that the wine was mixed with water. That was the usual custom in antiquity, and would naturally have been carried on into the Christian sacrament; though later Christian writers took a pious pleasure in discovering mystical meanings in the

¹ If a discourse had preceded, the greed of the early comers would have had to restrain itself, until it was at an end; by which time the majority of the believers would have assembled.

custom, as practised in the Eucharistic celebration. There arose in time certain sects, which for various reasons used only water and not wine ; and there was some controversy on the point in the third century. Harnack has gone so far as to suggest that the early Christian Church used wine or water indifferently in the Eucharist, and interpreted Christ's blessing as referring, not to any specific elements, but to the general act of eating and drinking in His Name. But this theory has met with practically no acceptance ;¹ the vast majority of citations, and the general evidence of Church tradition and custom, speak quite unequivocally for the use of bread and wine, as the only recognised elements in the Eucharist.

The phrase in 1 Corinthians x. 16 resembles the account in St Luke xxii. in apparently placing the blessing of the cup before the breaking of the bread ; and this is the order given in the Didaché ; but the other order is given elsewhere and is traditional.

There is no trace of a liturgy in the New Testament ; but the similarity between the accounts

¹ Harnack's arguments are given in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, vii. 2, 1891, and are combated, most completely, by Zahn. *Brod und Wein im Abendmahl der alten Kirche*.

of the institution in the Gospels, and in St Paul, may justify the inference that the blessing of the elements was accompanied with a simple form of words, which repeated Christ's words of institution. In the *Didaché* we have prescribed forms of blessing and thanksgiving,¹ but it is there suggested that "prophets" may use their own language.

We cannot affirm that any single posture of prayer was universal among the early Christians. In later times the standing posture was more usual, as it was among the Jews (St Mark xi. 25) ; but kneeling was also a recognised attitude (Acts vii. 60 ; ix. 40 ; xx. 36 ; xxi. 5 ; Ephesians iii. 14). In the second century, kneeling was considered the proper attitude for penitential prayer, and in fasting seasons ; standing for festal seasons, including Sunday.

The evening love-feast must have been separated from the Eucharistic commemoration at a very early date. No doubt the union of the two led to such disorders as St Paul reprehends in the Corinthian Church, and we may, perhaps, see the first step by which the two were disjoined in 1 Corinthians xi. 34. There is some doubt

¹ See note at end of chapter.

possible whether this was already the case in Pliny's time ; he writes in his letter to Trajan, already referred to : " On a specific day, before dawn, the Christians come together and sing a hymn to Christ as a God, singing in turns, and bind themselves by an oath " (the Latin word is *sacramentum*) " not to steal or cheat ; after this they separate, and come together again to take food." Since we find the term *sacramentum* soon afterwards applied as the regular term for the Eucharist, it is natural to suppose that the Christians of this time also used it in this sense, and that Pliny did not thoroughly understand what they told him. In that case, we have here an account of (1) an early morning Sacrament, where perhaps a recital of Christian duty was made ; (2) a later social meal. But if there may be doubt here, there is none possible with regard to Justin's account (*Apol.* i. 67 and 65), who says : " On the day called the day of the sun, we meet, and the memoirs of the Apostles, or the writings of the prophets, are read for a suitable length of time ; then the president gives an admonition, and an exhortation to imitate these noble examples. Then we all stand up and pray in common. Then bread and wine

are brought to the president; he offers praise and thanks to the Father of all, through the Name of His Son and the Holy Spirit, and blessing for His gifts; and the people respond Amen. Then the deacons give to each a share in the elements which have been blessed, and carry them to those who are absent.¹ The rich and generous give contributions of their own free will; and this collection is deposited before the president, who helps orphans, and widows, and sick, and needy, and prisoners, and strangers, and all who are in want." In this important passage, we find the same skeleton of service as that which existed in the public service of the Apostolic age, viz., reading with preaching, prayer and praise. Singing is not mentioned here, as it is by Pliny; but there can be no doubt that Christian hymns were in existence and common use. Antiphonal singing is said to have been introduced by Ignatius circ. 110 A.D.²

Baptism.

The Gospel sacrament of Holy Baptism is obviously of New Testament date, and was the regular rite of admission into the Christian

¹ This seems to be a case not of Reservation, but of coincident Administration to the absent.

² Socrates, *H.E.* vi. 8.

society, from Pentecost onwards (Acts ii. 41). The forgiveness of sins is always regarded as its accompaniment, or result. The most complete New Testament exposition of its doctrine is given in Romans vi. 3, ff.; but its form is all that calls for our present consideration. In New Testament times, probably any Christian who wished to do so might administer the rite; at any rate, there is absolutely no sign that a special minister was required for it. The element was always water, and immersion seems to have been the usual rule, though not universal. The Didaché (vii.) seems to give the actual practice of the time: "Baptize after this manner, having first recited all these precepts" (the moral rules in chapters i. to vi.); "baptize into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, in living water. But if thou hast not living water, baptize into other water; and if thou canst not in cold water, then baptize in warm. But if thou hast neither, pour out water upon the head thrice, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.¹ And before the baptism, let the baptizer

¹ It is plain that immersion and affusion were regarded as equally valid; but that the baptism must be into the three-fold Name, in all cases.

and the baptized fast, and any others that are able ; but thou shalt order the baptized to fast one or two days beforehand."

There is no certain trace of infant baptism in the New Testament. We hear of whole households being baptized at once, which would seem to include infants ; and the analogy of Jewish circumcision would make it, *a priori*, probable that Christians baptized infants. But no certainty can be felt about New Testament usage ; there is no single voice of opposition to infant baptism among the Church fathers ; heretics practised it unrebuked, and it seems on consideration to be most consonant with the spirit of Christianity.¹

¹ In the earliest Church it can certainly not have been usual, nor perhaps in the first half of the second century. It may have become the regular practice, when the conception of the Church, as a separate body distinct from the world outside, had grown more precise, and the value of membership in the Church had become more emphasised. The difficulties and controversies, which surround the matter nowadays, are undoubtedly serious, and call for prompt attention. In practice, the unrestricted administration of Baptism seems, superficially at least, a profanation which evaporates all or nearly all reality from the rite. The right method of meeting the difficulty is not easy to see ; but one point seems fairly plain, viz., that Baptism can only be a living rite, where Church membership is a living reality ; and that ultimately it will be found necessary to recall attention to all that is meant and involved by such membership. Until adult Christians

Except in St Matthew xxviii. 19, there is no New Testament mention of baptism into the threefold Name. All the other references speak of baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts ii. 38 ; viii. 16 ; x. 48 ; xix. 5 ; Romans vi. 3 ; Galatians iii. 27), with slight variations of phraseology. Perhaps the Trinitarian formula was a later expansion, unless we can hold the command in St Matthew xxviii. 19 to be verbally authentic, and not to have been modified in later reminiscence. It may be that the records of baptisms in the New Testament do not profess

realise their responsibility for all baptized children of their Church, and act up to that conception, baptism into that Church can scarcely carry its full significance to the popular mind. This is, in fact, the idea which the ritual of the English Church distinctly asserts, by its requirement that each child should be, where it is possible, baptized at a public service, and should be accompanied by sponsors. The sponsors represent the Church, and are expected to undertake on its behalf a responsibility for the child, which continues till the child is confirmed. And the rubric, which requires each candidate for confirmation to have a sponsor or witness, shows that it is not the Church's intention that the responsibility of older Christians for their younger brethren should cease, even at Confirmation. There can be no question that, if there was a more general insistence upon the provision of suitable sponsors, and a more conscientious discharge of the duties of sponsorship, the human chances, that the Baptismal sacrament should be an effective reality, would be greatly increased, and the intention of the English Church would be more faithfully carried out.

to give the baptismal formula, but are only intended to express the fact that the baptism was Christian; though this theory seems unconvincing. But the threefold Name in baptism is found at a very early date (as in the Didaché quoted above; and in Justin quoted below), and it is universal from the second century onwards. This baptismal formula provided the framework, on which the earliest Christian creeds were formed; of which we retain the so-called Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. The *Quicumque Vult* is a later hymn, and not strictly a creed at all. A creed was, properly, a public profession of faith, made at baptism. The Apostles' Creed, as we possess it, is almost certainly of later than Apostolic date, but its articles can all be supported from Apostolic teaching,¹ and there is no doubt that one or more forms of rudimentary creeds did exist in the first century. On no other theory can we explain the references in the New Testament to a "form of sound words"; and such seems a reasonable interpretation of the phrase in 1 Timothy vi. 12.

¹ Except the clause*, "He descended into Hell," for which it is not easy to find convincing support in New Testament writings; however reasonable, and almost inevitable, it may be in itself.

The Nicene Creed dates from the fourth century ; but each of its articles, as Churchmen believe, can be supported out of the New Testament writings.

There is no record of a special baptismal service in the New Testament ; and the Didaché, as we have seen, says little on the point. The first detailed description comes again from Justin Martyr (*Apol.* i. 61, 65) : “ Whoever are persuaded and believe that our teaching is true, and undertake to live according to it, are instructed to fast and pray, and ask pardon from God for their previous sins ; and we fast and pray with them. Then we lead them to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated in the way in which we have been regenerated ; they receive then the bath of water, in the name of God the Father and Ruler of all, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. For Christ said, “ Unless ye be regenerated, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of the Heavens.” Thus, in order that we should not remain children of necessity or ignorance, but of free choice and knowledge, and may receive forgiveness of the sins which we have committed, there is named in the water, over him who chooses to be regenerated, and has repented

of his sins, the name of God the Father and Ruler of all ; and he names it, who leads him that is to be washed, to the bath. This bath is called illumination, because those who learn these things are illuminated in the understanding ; and the man, who is being illuminated, is washed in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who foretold by the prophets everything concerning Jesus. And afterwards we lead him to those who are called brothers, where they are gathered together to offer prayers in common, with fervour, on behalf of themselves and the illuminated one, and all others everywhere, that, having learnt the truth, we may be thought worthy to be found, by our works, virtuous livers, and guardians of the commandments which have been given to us, that we may receive the eternal salvation. After the prayers are ended, we greet one another with a kiss."

Confirma-
tion.

The sacramental rite of Confirmation needs a few words of mention. In Acts ii. 38 the gift of the Holy Spirit is apparently connected with baptism alone. 'But in Acts viii. 15-17 ; xix. 5, 6, it is associated with the imposition of hands, following at some interval after baptism,

and it seems to be a necessary supplement of baptism (Hebrews vi. 2). On the other hand it is quite certain that the laying-on of *Apostolic* hands could not have been exercised in the case of every Christian convert, whether at or after baptism; such a fact is humanly impossible. Probably there was some ceremony of benediction which accompanied or followed baptism, and would be performed by the person officiating at the baptism, or by some recognised leader in a local church. We have no reference to the practice in the Didaché, or in Justin.¹ But, by the third century, it was the proper completion in all cases of the baptismal system. As infant baptism became general, Confirmation would naturally be separated from baptism, and would come at the end of a period of preparation; for it was treated as the consecration to the spiritual priesthood, which belongs to every full member of the Christian body. After the third century, the Western Church, on the authority of Acts viii. 17, restricted the power of Confirmation to bishops; but the Eastern Church allowed, and

¹ Unless Justin can be conjectured to include Confirmation among the prayers which he mentions as following on the baptism; a pure supposition and no more.

still allows, priests and deacons to administer the rite.¹ Catholic practice is therefore not uniform in this matter. But there is certainly wisdom in the insistence on Confirmation, as a necessary supplement to baptism, on personal profession of faith after proper instruction, before members of the Church can be received into full communion. Some such rite of solemn profession and benediction is necessary to emphasise the reality of the Christian vocation ; and it seems quite reasonable that such a rite should be performed by the supreme officers of the Church, as the due representatives of the complete body.

NOTE TO CHAPTER VII

*The Eucharistic Forms of Prayer in the
Didaché, IX. and X.*

CONCERNING the Service of Thanksgiving, give ye thanks after this manner. First concerning the cup : We thank Thee, our Father, for the Holy Vine of David Thy Servant,² which thou didst make

¹ Though with oil blessed by a bishop.

² Or " Son." The Greek word can bear either meaning.

known to us through Jesus, Thy Servant ;¹ to Thee be the glory for ever. And concerning the bread that is broken : We thank Thee, our Father, for the life and knowledge, which Thou didst make known to us through Jesus, Thy Servant¹ ; to Thee be the glory for ever. Even as this bread that is broken was scattered upon the mountains, and being gathered together was made one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom ; for Thine is the glory and the power, through Jesus Christ for ever.

And after that ye have been filled, give ye thanks after this manner : We thank Thee, Holy Father, for Thy Holy Name, which Thou hast made to dwell in our hearts ; and for the knowledge and for faith and immortality, which Thou didst make known to us through Jesus, Thy Servant ;¹ to Thee be the glory for ever. Thou, Almighty Ruler, didst create all things for Thy Name's sake ; Thou didst give both food and drink unto men for enjoyment, that they may give thanks unto Thee. But to us, Thou didst freely grant spiritual food and drink, and life eternal, through Thy Servant.¹ We give thanks to Thee before

¹ Or " Son." The Greek word can bear either meaning.

all things that Thou art mighty. Thine is the glory for ever. Remember, O Lord, Thy Church, to deliver it from all evil, and perfect it in Thy love ; and gather it from the four winds, even Thy Church which hath been sanctified, into Thy Kingdom, which Thou hast prepared for it, for Thine is the power and the glory for ever. Let Thy grace come, and let this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. Whosoever is holy, let him come ; and whosoever is not, let him repent. Maranatha.¹ Amen.

¹ *I.e.* " The Lord cometh."

EPILOGUE

THE curse of much theological controversy is the abuse or unintelligent use of words. Phrases such as "Divine mysteries," "Apostolic succession," "the grace of Orders," "the Catholic Church," once had a very simple meaning, and were used to represent certain living and intelligible realities. But, in process of time, they have too often become the mere catchwords of partisan controversialists. The realities, which they were meant to represent, have been obscured, and the formulæ themselves have been invested with a spurious reality of their own ; and, in such an atmosphere of catchwords, party division has thriven with rank growth. Under these circumstances, it is essential that we should go back to the earliest Church, and patiently investigate the historical records of primitive Christianity, seeking in this way to discover what meaning such phrases bore to the people who first used them, and what was the living reality which the phrases were meant to represent. To discover this, it is

indispensable that we should cling closely to our actual evidence, and not theorise except on that basis ; a certain margin for probable speculation must be allowed, but all such speculation should be carefully guarded by constant reference to an honest interpretation of the historical records. Such is the principle which this book has attempted to apply, in order to find out what is meant by such phrases as " a divinely ordained ministry," and " a Catholic system of public worship." The conclusions which have been outlined may be briefly recapitulated.

1. A divinely-ordained system of ministry is one which, having arisen naturally (*i.e.* in harmony with Apostolic principles) to answer Christian needs, has continued and still continues to answer those needs. The phrase " Christian needs " must of course be understood in its widest sense, as referring not only to considerations of moral goodness, but also of intellectual truth ; and as including not only the spiritual necessities of individuals, but the corporate welfare of Christendom. So too it may not always be easy to decide whether a development is natural or perverted ; in doing so we must take a wide view, and not give a verdict under the influence of attachment to

ephemeral ideas. In short, we must attempt to view the question *sub specie æternitatis*, with divine wisdom as well as with divine charity ; and the difficulty of this attempt ought to make us very chary indeed of condemning developments, which may not appear to us entirely consonant with our own theories.

The well-known theory, that the continuity of God's grace in the Church is externally secured by the Episcopal imposition of hands, that thus a conduit of grace, reaching back to the Apostles, is preserved and prolonged, has the merit of definite outline. But it is questionable whether it has any other merit. Not only does it seem to embody a remarkably mechanical and unspiritual conception of God's grace, but also it cannot produce sufficient evidence from the Apostolic writings to substantiate it. All that the evidence allows us to say is, that the threefold ministry was the system which the Church gradually developed as the representative organ of its corporate life. The Spirit of God was not restricted to one form of organisation, but for normal purposes the threefold ministry was the form, under which the Church, as a divine institution, chose to stereotype the official exercise of its corporate grace.

This theory gives to the historic ministry a more human character, but does not thereby make it the less divine, so long as the continuous guidance of God's Spirit in historical development remains a reality of belief.

2. A Catholic system of worship is one which, having grown up naturally (*i.e.* in harmony with Apostolic precedent) to embody Christian faith, and to give opportunities for Christian communion with God, continues to serve those ends. This conclusion has been less emphasised, for it is less controvertible ; but its practical bearing is plain. It enables us to believe that there is very little necessarily fixed or unalterable in the forms of Christian worship. In every age we must be prepared to remodel our forms to suit changing conditions ; with the indispensable proviso, however, that we must cling to essentials, and keep systems and formularies which shall allow us, and help us, to perpetuate the Christian verities, and to enter into communion with God in corporate prayer and Sacrament.

Thus we have seen how simply and naturally the ministerial and liturgical systems, which the Church of England possesses, grew out of the unsystematic precedents of the Apostolic age ;

we can see for ourselves how far these systems still conduce to the maintenance and development of Christian life and truth, whether individual or corporate. And so we are enabled to assert, no longer as a catchword, but as the expression of a living truth, that the English Church is linked on in unbroken continuity of life, spirit, thought, and organisation, to the earliest ages of Christianity, and thus linked to the Person of the Incarnate Son of God, Whose hand has guided the growth of His Church, from its beginning up to the times in which we live, and will still guide it in wisdom to its final and perfect fulfilment.

APPENDIX

A SYNOPSIS OF NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES, BEARING UPON CONTROVERSIAL POINTS IN THEORIES OF CHURCH ORGANISATION

- i. The terms of office are used in the New Testament without definition, and are not used to designate one exclusive class of officials.

"Apostle." Restricted to the Twelve: Acts i. 26; ii. 37, 42; ix. 27. Applied to others beside the Twelve: Acts xv. 2, 4, 6, 22, 23; xvi. 4 (where it must apply to James, if to no others outside the Twelve). Acts xiv. 4 (Barnabas). Romans i. 1, and elsewhere (Paul). 1 Corinthians xv. 5, 7-9 (the Twelve, then James, then all the Apostles, then Paul). Galatians i. 19 (James). Romans xvi. 7 (Andronicus and Junias "of note among the Apostles"). 2 Corinthians viii. 23 (certain brethren the "apostles of the churches"). Philippians ii. 25 (Epaphroditus, the "apostle" of the Philippians). 2 Timothy

i: 11 ("Apostle" in conjunction with "herald" and "teacher").

Cf. also 1 Corinthians iv. 9; xii. 28; 2 Corinthians xi. 5; xii. 11; Ephesians ii. 20; iii. 5; iv. 11; 1 Thessalonians ii. 6; 2 Peter iii. 2.

"*Prophet.*" Acts xi. 27; xv. 32; xxi. 10; 1 Corinthians xii. 28; xiv. 29, 37; Ephesians ii. 20; iii. 5; iv. 11; Revelation xxii. 9.

"*Teacher.*" Acts xiii. 1, 3; Ephesians iv. 11; 2 Timothy i. 11.

"*Evangelist.*" Acts xxi. 8; Ephesians iv. 11; 2 Timothy iv. 5.

"*Pastor.*" Ephesians iv. 11.

"*Bishop.*" Acts xx. 28; Philippians i. 1; 1 Timothy iii. 1; Titus i. 7.

"*Presbyter.*" Acts xi. 30; xv. 2, 4, 6, 22, 23; xvi. 4; xx. 17; xxi. 18; 1 Timothy v. 1, 17, 19; Titus i. 5; James v. 14; 2 John 1; 3 John 1; Revelation iv. 4, 10; v. 5, 6, 8.

"*Deacon.*" Philippians i. 1; 1 Timothy iii. 8.

2. The New Testament evidence for the necessity of Apostolic ordination, as a preliminary to undertaking public ministry, is insufficient and indecisive, especially for the earliest time.

Acts vi. 6. The Twelve lay their hands on the Seven.

Acts xiv. 23. Paul and Barnabas ordain presbyters.

1 Timothy iv. 14. Timothy has been ordained by the presbyters or (2 Timothy i. 6) by Paul.

1 Timothy v. 22. Timothy has the right of ordination, if, as is doubtful, this verse refers to ordination.

Titus i. 5. Titus is to appoint presbyters.

BUT

Acts xiii. 1. There is no hint that the prophets and teachers of Antioch had been ordained officially; yet they ordain for missionary work (verse 3).

Acts xi. 30. We have no hint of ordination in the case of the Jerusalem presbyters (though it is a possible conjecture).

Acts xx. 17. There is no sign of the way in which the Ephesian presbyters had been appointed (though the argument from Acts xiv. 23 is quite fair).

Acts xii. 17; xv. 13, 19; xxi. 18. James has a supreme position in the Church at Jerusalem, but there is no evidence that he had received ordination.

Acts ix. 17. An ordinary disciple lays his hands on St Paul, who receives the Holy Ghost, and immediately preaches in public.

1 Corinthians xvi. 15 ; 1 Thessalonians v. 12. There seems a probable hint of volunteer ministry.

1 Corinthians iv. 1 ; 1 Peter iv. 10. " Stewardship " is obviously at present unofficial in significance.

Romans i. 11. This allusion is entirely vague and general, and cannot honestly be assumed to refer to a right of conferring Orders.

1 Corinthians xiv. 29, 37. Apparently prophecy could be undertaken without authorisation.

Acts xxi. 4. " Disciples " speak in the Spirit.

3. The Church has a voice in the appointment of its ministers, and the direction of their work.

Acts i. 23. It elects two candidates for the vacant Apostolate.

Acts vi. 5. It elects the Seven.

Acts xi. 22. " They " send Barnabas.

Acts xv. 2. The Church sends Paul and Barnabas.

Acts xv. 40. The " brethren " commend Paul and Silas.

Acts xv. 4, 22. The Church is associated with its leaders in official actions.

4. The Church has the right to test and call to account every one of its officers.

Acts xi. 2. Peter is called to account.

Acts xiv. 27. Paul and Barnabas report to the Church.

1 Corinthians iv. 3. The Church judges Paul.

2 Corinthians x. 8. Paul's authority is challenged. *Cf.* 1 Corinthians ix. 1, 2.

1 Corinthians xii. 3. Prophets are to be tested. *Cf.* 1 Thessalonians v. 20 ; 1 John iv. 1 ; 2 John 10 ; 2 Peter ii. 1.

Galatians i. 8. A preacher and an Apostle are to be tested.

Cf. 2 Corinthians xi. 4, 13 ; Revelation ii. 20.

2 Timothy ii. 2. Teachers are to be tested.

Titus ii. 15. The authority of Titus might be challenged.—And the usual appeal in defence of authority is to results. *Cf.* Romans xv. 18 ; 2 Corinthians iii. 1, 2 ; vi. 3 ; x. 14 ; xii. 12 ; 1 Thess. v. 12 ; 1 Corinthians ix. 1, 2 (where Paul appeals to his spiritual experiences and the results of his ministry to defend his Apostleship).

5. Spiritual prerogatives are not confined to officials, and spiritual gifts do not necessarily come by official acts.

Acts v. 3. Peter excommunicates.

1 Timothy i. 20. Paul excommunicates.

1 Timothy v. 20. Timothy has a power of public rebuke.

Titus iii. 10. Titus excommunicates.

Acts iv. 35, 37 ; v. 13 ; viii. 14 ; ix. 32. The Twelve are the recognised centres of administrative work.

1 Peter v. 1. Presbyters have pastoral work.
Cf. 1 Timothy v. 17 ; James v. 14.

Acts viii. 17, 18. The Holy Ghost is given by the imposition of Peter and John's hands, and, in Acts xix. 5, 6, by the imposition of Paul's hands.

BUT

Acts ii. 4. The Holy Ghost is given directly, as also in Acts x. 44.

Acts ix. 17. The Holy Ghost is given by the imposition of an ordinary disciple's hands.

St Matthew xviii. 17. The ultimate charge of discipline is to be in the hands of the Church.

St Matthew xvi. 18, 19. The commission of absolution and excommunication is entrusted to

Peter as the representative of the disciples, and in St John xx. 22, 23, to the disciples corporately.

Romans xvi. 17. The brethren are to excommunicate.

1 Corinthians v. 3, 11, 13. The Church is to excommunicate, under the spiritual presidency of its founder.

2 Thessalonians iii. 6, 14. The Church excommunicates.

These passages are not all of equal decisiveness or importance, but I do not think I have omitted any of real bearing upon the points at issue. And they are sufficient, at the very least, to show that any theory, which assumes a definite system of exclusive Orders, with a formal transmission of official grace, to have existed in the Apostolic times, has to flout a great deal of evidence directly inconsistent with such an assumption.

In sum, we have in the New Testament, several words used to *describe* certain classes of people—apostle, elder, bishop, deacon, prophet, teacher, etc. These words are apparently used in an entirely fluid way. We have the term “apostle” used to describe the original Twelve (the original messengers of Christ)—to describe missionaries,

messengers of Christ, but at second hand—to describe mere delegates of a church, such as Epaphroditus ; whilst people so little known as Andronicus and Junias are called “ of note among the apostles.” The only circumstance common to all of them appears to be their bearing of a message, whether Christ’s message, the message of Christianity, or a church’s message. Again, “ prophet ” seems to be loosely used. It means an “ inspired preacher,” and little is said about the prophets. Similarly “ teacher ” is hardly explained, but can only mean “ teacher of Christianity.” When we get to the presbyter—bishop matters are even more confused. Sometimes the presbyter is the bishop, sometimes apparently he is not. He rules, he oversees, etc. The deacon’s qualifications may be briefly put as morality and monogamy ; the bishop’s are the same, with the only difference that they should be more eminent in his case and that he should be “ not a novice.” It seems clear that in New Testament times these words represent little that is definite. St Paul himself was apostle, prophet, and teacher, in the sense that he had all the qualifications and exercised at times any functions that might be called *peculiar* to these offices. He

was a bishop, too, if bishops had to rule and administer and oversee. The terms are used loosely and their meanings overlap. In so far as they refer to functions, those functions are ascribed sometimes to one word, sometimes to another ; in so far as they refer to particular men, those men appear to be described sometimes under one title, sometimes under another. In other words, the terms are still *descriptions*, and loose descriptions, not *names* of particular, well-defined, and specialized offices. And the only fact that binds these divergences together is *the original meaning of the word*. "Apostle" always connotes a mission or message, "prophet" inspired preaching, "evangelist" exposition or telling of the gospel, "presbyter" a certain age and position, and the authority due to them, "bishop" the duty of oversight, "deacon" service or subordinate ministry. This gives the reason why the Twelve and Epaphroditus may alike be called "apostles," and the elder brethren and a bishop may alike be called "presbyter" (for bishops would always be elders). In brief there is nothing in the New Testament *definitely* equivalent to the threefold Orders. We have adumbrations of the latter, but no clear functions

assigned to any particular order, still less clear names or clear offices. On the other hand, all the *functions* given to any term or office are still carried out; the missionary in a restricted, and every priest in a wide sense is an apostle. Every priest and many lay people are prophets and teachers and evangelists, whilst bishops and deacons exist, and anybody who has any position or authority in a church can do many of the duties of the "presbyters"—quite apart from the fact that "priest" may also be held as equivalent to "presbyter." It seems therefore that not only have we as original principles, the unity of the Spirit belonging to all Christians, and the unity of Church recognition of Church office in some form or other, but also *the unity of Christian functions*, which were laid down vaguely, as necessity arose, by the great ones of the early Church, crystallized into definite offices at a later date, and still persist in definite duties carried out by some person or class of persons in the Church, and frequently by a perfectly clear and well-defined person or class of persons.

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